

“RHODES MUST FALL”: STUDENT ACTIVISM AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

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Part One: The Problem of Memory

Preface

Rhodes Must Fall is a student collective based at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa. The group emerged in March 2015 in response to growing protest over the presence of a statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the University's upper campus. Perhaps the most infamous figure in all of Great Britain's extensive imperial history, many considered the statue to be an open glorification of a "racist tyrant."¹ As the title of the collective suggests, a growing movement emerged demanding the statue's removal. While University administrators deliberated Rhodes' fate, students continued to demonstrate, hosting highly attended dialogues and debates, and covering the statue in paint and black trash bags. Soon, the whole country watched as the Rhodes Must Fall movement spread beyond UCT. Academic institutions throughout the Western Cape² and as far north as Johannesburg in Gauteng³ experienced similar protests and saw their existing monuments to various colonial figures defaced.

Despite this growing momentum, a substantial opposition emerged in favor of the statue remaining at UCT. Good or bad, they argued, Rhodes was an influential figure in South Africa, and removing his statue would constitute a gross act of historical erasure. That the protests continued even after the statue was removed the following month – and continue still – tells us that there is something much larger at stake. The Rhodes Must Fall protesters have defined these somethings as the prevalence of institutional racism in the Academy and the structural inequality that continues to marginalize South Africans of color even "post"-apartheid: "While this movement may have been sparked around the issue of the Rhodes Statue: the existence of the

¹ Ntsika Maki, Skype interview with author, November 12, 2015

² South African province; Capital: Cape Town

³ South African province; Capital: Johannesburg

statue is only one aspect of the social injustice of UCT. The fall of 'Rhodes' is symbolic for the inevitable fall of white supremacy and privilege at our campus.”⁴ The movement was never solely about the statue. It was a physical manifestation of the rampant inequality that incited students to protest in the first place; a slice of the colonial past bleeding into a neo-colonial present.

The ANC⁵-led South Africa that emerged out of the dark ages of apartheid has done its best to distance itself from the country’s colonial history, however. This distancing has precipitated a culture of forgetting most readily observable in the state-endorsed narrative of the “Rainbow Nation.” Coined by anti-apartheid activist, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, this phrase has become unilaterally associated with a South Africa rebranded as a unified, post-racial, multicultural democracy. “Each of us,” President Nelson Mandela proclaimed, “is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world” (Manzo 1996, 71). With everyone’s stake in the country affirmed as equal (despite *centuries* of racially-motivated social, political, and economic oppression) and amnesties granted to those responsible for perpetuating gross human rights violations under the apartheid regime, ANC politicians decided – against the will of the people, I should add – that the best course of action would be to forget the past in order to preserve the rainbow of peace and progress towards a more positive future.

Several critiques, issued by academics and activists alike, have emerged in the years that have ensued since the ideology of rainbowism appeared alongside South Africa’s first

⁴ “UCT Rhodes Must Fall Mission Statement,” *Facebook.com*, posted March 25, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/RhodesMustFall/posts/1559394444336048>.

⁵ African National Congress

democratic elections in 1994. South African poet and political activist, Jeremy Cronin, argued that this gross oversimplification of the past has prioritized short term reconciliation at the expense of lasting political change:

Identity formation as well as the myth of the “rainbow nation” and its performative intention have served to discursively create a national identity that has been top-down in its constitution and implementation. As a result, true reconciliation has been foregone in place of a simplified and somewhat candy-coated myth of peace that has served to reconcile those on the inside whilst pitting them against those on the outside. Allowing ourselves to sink into a smug rainbowism will prove to be a terrible betrayal of the possibilities for real transformation, real reconciliation, and real national unity that are still at play in our contemporary South African reality. (Ouzman 2008, 15)

Furthermore, placing undue focus on the present and future grossly underestimates the many ways in which the legacies of oppression continue to limit the opportunities available to non-white South Africans. These persisting inequalities – the realities of which exist in direct contradiction to the color-blind narrative of the rainbow nation – are precisely what the Rhodes Must Fall movement sought to draw attention to. The Rhodes statue was a symbol of an oppressive past that is also present. In that respect, the protests for rights, representation, and greater institutional support can also be interpreted as a struggle over memory and history.

From politics and international relations, to psychology, history, and anthropology, the question of memory has been interrogated across a variety of disciplines. Such has also been true of my academic career here at Mount Holyoke College as well as my semester exchange at the University of Cape Town. I have analyzed, for example, the role of memory in the efforts to rebuild after the Rwandan genocide in the team-taught international relations seminar, *Building Peace Post Conflict*. In my *Anthropology of Violence* and *Anthropology and Human Rights* courses, we discussed the durational nature of memory with regard to the experience and re-narration of psychological trauma by Holocaust survivors as well as the survivors of La

Violencia in Guatemala respectively. Memory, particularly as it pertains to the anti and post-apartheid struggle, was a recurring theme in all of the classes I took at UCT, from my ethnomusicology class at the South African College of Music, to the African Studies course on Culture, Identity, and Globalization, to the Anthropology of Power and Wealth, and the fine arts course entitled, Images in Conflict. My understanding of the topic has been most notably informed by the anthropology seminar I am currently enrolled in, Professor Andrew Lass' Memory, History, and Forgetting. Through our reading of Paul Connerton (1989; 2009), we have moved beyond the real-world examples of memory in action to bigger, more theoretical questions like: Why do memory and history matter? What are the processes that shape collective memory? What are the processes that facilitate forgetting?

In South Africa, memory is king. The recentness with which apartheid has ended means that, despite numerous efforts to the contrary, the past is very much a part of public imagination. More importantly, this past continues to shape the present experiences and material circumstances of South Africans of color. With this particular research project, I aim to investigate how memory and history have affected the development of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, and, more importantly, how the Rhodes Must Fall movement is reshaping memory and history in South Africa. This essay joins a voluminous trove of literature on memory – a topic that Connerton describes as “now ubiquitous” (2009, 1) – in anthropology, Africana Studies, and countless other disciplines as I demonstrated above. While the bulk of the existing cannon has focused on memory and forgetting within the context of war and genocide – with more than a significant portion similarly dedicated to the memory (or “lack” thereof) of apartheid in democratic South Africa – this project follows the reactivation of social memory within a very current (ongoing, in fact) situation. In a day and age where history and social memory have lost

their eminence, or so Connerton has argued (2009), the Rhodes Must Fall movement demonstrates that memory still matters and that it also matters to young people.

The first part of this essay will examine the problem of memory in South Africa. In the introduction, I will problematize the context of globalization through which I encountered South Africa, demonstrating how the processes of globalization – notably the development of global cities like Cape Town – have supplanted local histories of struggle with cosmopolitanism. Through an analysis of several biographical texts and colonial legislation, the following chapter will demonstrate how historical revisionism has produced an ambivalent, apologetic, and in some cases, positive characterization of Rhodes that allowed his statue to exist unperturbed until the protests began last spring. Chapter three will provide a closer look at the Rhodes statue – how it came into being – as well as an analysis of how identity shapes memory, and by consequence, one’s perception of the object.

Part two explores how the Rhodes Must Fall collective is confronting the problem of memory. In chapter four, I will demonstrate how students are using Facebook and Twitter to author their own histories within the movement. This chapter also includes a methods section detailing how I used social media and other digital technologies to conduct the research for this project. Chapter five outlines the performative aspects of protest. Analyzing the use of protest music as an example of the historical continuities between disparate social movements (i.e. Rhodes Must Fall and the anti-apartheid struggle) I further explain how this performativity transforms social identities into political ones. The reimagining of UCT’s – and all of South Africa – future brought about by this political awakening forms the basis of chapter six. Finally, in an effort to answer the question of why now, I conclude by resituating Rhodes Must Fall

within the larger global context, tracing its evolutions alongside the heightened sense of Black consciousness facilitated by the Black Lives Matter movement.

Introduction: Imagining Cape Town

My introduction to Rhodes Must Fall, much like the mounting frustrations and racial tensions that preceded it, began well before the actual events of the movement took place. It began in the fall of my second year at Mount Holyoke as the buzz of studying abroad nearly consumed my fellow classmates and me. I wanted the opportunity to travel while dusting off my increasingly unused French. My inner hipster rebelled, however, at the thought of spending a cliché semester tasting wine and visiting old churches in Europe. Hoping to pay homage to the Black francophone diaspora that birthed me, I had finally resolved to go to Dakar. These hopes were dashed prematurely by the sudden outbreak of Ebola in Senegal's neighboring countries. I was back to square one.

The idea of going to South Africa did not occur to me until I was encouraged by my friend Ron, then a first semester senior at Mount Holyoke in the throes of her Cape Town experience. I fell in love with the city from afar, through her eyes, as she depicted it on Facebook and Instagram: pristine beaches and panoramic views, tantalizing food and the promise of adventure. Her enthusiasm was infectious. On the few occasions that we were able to manage a Skype or WhatsApp call, her constant praise for everything Cape Town induced me to take the leap that resulted in my spending five months in a country that I knew next to nothing about. I knew that it was in Africa, the continent, and I knew that English was spoken there. I also knew that Cape Town hosted the World Cup in 2010. I had a vague notion of the history of apartheid in that I could tell you that apartheid, the historical event, happened. I could even point to Nelson Mandela as the "hero" of that event. However, I could not say how or when that information, incomplete as it was and still is, entered my consciousness. I had no idea how those five months, few as they were, would generate what could easily be described as an intellectual obsession

with a place I had (previously) been so wholly unconnected to, culminating in this thesis project more than a year later.

I arrived in South Africa during the North American summer of 2014, right in the middle of Cape Town's tenancy as the world design capital. There were film festivals to attend and pop-up galleries to peruse. I actually did end up going wine tasting (neighboring Stellenbosch is apparently home to several world-famous wineries) and frequented old churches – one old church in particular – quite often during my stay. St. George's Cathedral, designed by the famous colonial architect, Sir Herbert Baker (who will reappear later in our story), is home to one of my favorite Cape Townian haunts: The Crypt – a jazz club and restaurant literally located below the cathedral. Jazz aficionados like myself would go scope out the local and national talent, live, over a plate of fish and chips, a crisp bottle of Savanna Dry, or a steaming cup of rooibos tea.

Global Cities as Sites for New Histories

Writing on the prevalence of American universities establishing campuses internationally – and their subsequent effect on local geographies and cultural practices – anthropologist Tom Looser (2012) defines the global city as a site of breakdown between the municipal and the state. Lower tax revenues favored by neoliberal patterns of governance, which many could successfully argue South Africa endorsed after 1994, has placed increased constraints on the state's fiscal capabilities. Thus financial responsibility, including social welfare, is increasingly transferred to the city. The city, attempting to boost its revenue from the increase in its financial burden, turns to “entrepreneurial governance” (Looser 2012, 100), courting investment capital both domestic and foreign. Like Special Economic Zones, global cities gain their own agency, becoming “exceptional areas allowing for less regulation of capital, often without taxation, and

at times allowing for some suspension of local laws” (Looser 2012, 100). The resulting configuration of the global city is an urban landscape floating in an island-like ambiguity.

As he further explains, “neoliberalism implies freedom from responsibility; especially, it implies freedom from responsibility to any kind of alterity, in favor of responsibility only to one’s self. Logically, carried out as a principle, the result would be a kind of pure, self-identity, free of relation to others” (Looser 2012, 99). Embracing a philosophy of *tabula rasa*, this “freedom,” he argues, promotes historical indifference (Looser 2012, 107). Culturally rooted narratives are abandoned in favor of a glossy, boundless cosmopolitanism designed to attract certain kinds of people: people like me (sort of) and the upper middle class white students who make up the overwhelming majority of American students going abroad.

Though Tom Looser writes with specific reference to global cities in the East (think Yale-NUS College, established in Singapore in 2011), Cape Town is also this global city. Professor Nick Shepherd, a social archaeologist under whom I studied in the African Studies department at the University of Cape Town, had the following to say of the Mother City in his essay, *Ruin memory: a hauntology of Cape Town* (2012):

I have lived in Cape Town for most of the past twenty-five years. My own attitude towards the city remains almost entirely unresolved. I find it a beautiful, frustrating, scary, inspiring, liberating place to live. When I am away, I miss it. I never return without a sinking feeling in my stomach. ‘Back into the pressure cooker’ I say to myself, as the plane lines up for its final approach. More than most cities, Cape Town struggles under the weight on history...At the same time, the city has a reputation for hedonism and glib re-invention. A significant feature of the last couple of decades has been the move to stylize Cape Town as a global, cosmopolitan city. With this has come all of the paraphernalia of the global city – theme parks, mega-malls, backpacker precincts, township tours, ethnic villages, big-5 safaris, blue flag beaches – and a certain self-consciousness, as Cape Town performs the world to South Africa and South Africa to the world (Hall and Bombardella 2005; Marks 2005; Witz 2006). One’s experience of Cape Town is basically disjunctive: the massive and manifest disparities in wealth, and the sense of being caught between aspirational futures and heavy histories. (Shepherd 2012, 240)

Paul Connerton makes similar arguments in his book, *How Modernity Forgets* (2009). As the title suggests, he contends that structural forgetting is precipitated by the culture of modernity. Borrowing from Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, Connerton characterizes modernity as a period defined by a culture of hyper-consumerism wherein the processes of production have been completely obscured by the product itself. This analysis is extended to the built environment where most of the individuals interacting with the cityscape will in all likelihood have very little knowledge of the people who toiled to create the places through which they roam:

The identity of place is always embedded in the histories which people tell of them, and, most fundamentally, in the way in which those histories were originally constituted in processes of labour. Whenever we talk about places, what is at issue, whether we acknowledge it or not, are competing version of the histories in the process of which the present of those places came into being. (Connerton 2009, 50)

The same is true of global cities like Cape Town where local histories and narratives have been replaced by a more universally recognizable cosmopolitanism. Surveying all the glitz, glamour, and natural beauty the Mother City has to offer – albeit through the rosy, privileged lenses of an educational tourist – it is easy to ignore the history of violence and struggle that continues to characterize the very fabric of Cape Town's present-day urban configuration. Such, I have argued, is the pervasiveness of the dominant discourse framing the post-apartheid landscape as one of triumph over injustice and extraordinary heroism immortalized through super-humans like Nelson Mandela. These temporal understandings of history, and the state-sanctioned narratives that accompany it, work to obscure past and present struggles and local histories through the physical and ideological construction of global cities that exist outside the purview of history and culture.

It is through this context of globalization that I literally and metaphorically entered South Africa. It is through globalization – and the narrowing of spatial distances facilitated by online social networks such as Facebook and Twitter – that I became aware of the Rhodes Must Fall movement more than three months after I had returned to the United States. In taking on this project, I have been acutely aware of the relatively privileged position that I occupy with respect to the research:

I have yet to receive a response to the Facebook message I sent to Chumani Maxwele nearly two weeks ago. I fear that my Americanness will make my thesis project seem opportunistic; eclipsing the genuine interest in and personal identification with the topic. Having just finished the unit on diaspora in my African American anthropology class at UMass – where the centrality and dominance of the African American / U.S. Black experience was constantly dissected and critiqued – I cannot help but acknowledge my own geographical privilege. Knowing how often my own ethnicity has been erased or ignored because of the pervasiveness of privileging said African American experience within the diaspora, I fear that my citizenship (by birth, though not through parentage) and my belonging to the American academy will silence the very real insights I may have from lived experience as a product of migration, of the so-called third world, etc.⁶

Excerpted from the journal that I haphazardly kept throughout this thesis process, this particular entry aptly describes the tension between author/researcher and subject. One of my informants, James Clacherty, whom I had befriended in my economic anthropology class at UCT, expressed similar sentiments when I approached him about assisting me with this research: “This is such an exciting project! I wanted to do something similar, but then I realized there are all sorts of problems with a white male anthropologist doing a study on the movement.”⁷

While I am neither white nor male, I have had the privilege of watching the Rhodes Must Fall movement – and all of its accompanying trials and triumphs – unfold from the comfort and safety of my dorm room in South Hadley, Massachusetts. What would have undoubtedly been

⁶ Author’s notes

⁷ James Clacherty, Facebook message to author, November 7, 2015.

just another headline, however – or another photograph of a sea of faceless, woefully disillusioned protesters – was brought to life in a way that would not have been possible without the personal connection I formed with Cape Town and its inhabitants. This is *their* story. Not simply a recounting of events and dates and other facts (though these details will also be included for context), but the scripting of new narratives all together – narratives that claim that South Africa still has a long way to go in confronting and redressing its unjust past; narratives that claim that this past is also present; narratives that redefine what it means to be young and what it means to be Black; narratives that put students and young people of color at the forefront of bringing about the dreams of transformation that were sold to their parents in 1994.

Chapter 1 - The Man behind the Statue: Rhodes in South Africa

"The weeks and months I spent studying biographies, letters, speeches, diaries and articles became a descent into evil. [Rhodes] stole one million square miles of Africa. His imperial notions were very much a facade. He was primarily driven by personal ambition and a craving for wealth." - Antony Thomas

How does one capture a life as singularly complex and contentious as that of Cecil John Rhodes? Such is a question with which dozens of historians and biographers have grappled throughout the near century that has elapsed since his death. Endeavors to answer this question have resulted in the same frustratingly apologetic depictions of Rhodes as the troubled mastermind, cutting edge financier, and devoted patriot haplessly swept up in an all-consuming surge of British imperialism; *a man of his time*. What follows is only the briefest of biographies; for even an entire thesis could not sufficiently outline all that Rhodes managed to accomplish in the three decades he spent in southern Africa. In an attempt to resituate Rhodes within the context of British colonialism – so as to challenge the lazy, uncritical argument that the historical moment during which his misdeeds occurred absolves him of all ill-intent and wrongdoing – this chapter is also an exercise in South African history, colonial legislation, and geography. It is above all a critique of the misleading ways in which Rhodes has been remembered in historical and biographical texts. Such heroic depictions obscure Rhodes' role as an early architect of apartheid. Acknowledging this role is a crucial part of understanding the recent frustrations – which culminated in the Rhodes Must Fall Movement – over the persisting presence of the statue of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town's upper campus that ultimately led to its removal last April.

Natal

Cecil John Rhodes was born in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, England on July 5, 1853. He was the fifth child born to Louisa Peacock Rhodes and Francis William Rhodes, a country parson. Numerous biographical sources have commented on Rhodes' sickliness as a child. His poor health eventually necessitated his leaving Bishop's Stortford Grammar School at the age of sixteen. Believing him to be consumptive, Rhodes' family arranged for him to travel to his older brother Herbert, who had established himself as a planter in Natal. They hoped that the coastal region's balmy climate, presently referred to as KwaZulu-Natal, would better suit his delicate constitution. And so, with a generous gift of £2,000 from his Aunt Sophy, Cecil Rhodes set sail from England to Durban⁸, South Africa on June 21, 1870. He was not yet seventeen.

As a new settler, Cecil was "*entitled to a grant of fifty acres*" of land (Marlowe 1972, 54) [emphasis added]. He and his brother – who already owned 200 acres of land – went into cotton farming together, turning a profitable second crop after a disastrous first season. Cecil (who would later be remembered for his vigorous work ethic) was most proactive in establishing their agricultural enterprise, taking charge of the Zulu labor and building a homestead for him and his brother. Herbert, by contrast, was a fickle sort of fellow who was unable to keep to one venture for long. Having had his fill of farming, he decided to try his luck in the diamond fields emerging along the Vaal River. Herbert left prior to witnessing the farm's success in March of 1871.

Only six months into his stay in Natal, Cecil found himself managing the plantation on his own. He eagerly took on the additional responsibility, confident in his previous

⁸ Located along the Indian Ocean (which borders South Africa's eastern coast), Durban was one of two main cities (the second being Pietermaritzburg) in Natal. From 1839 to 1843, Natal (Natalia in Afrikaans) was a Boer republic of Afrikaner emigrants escaping British rule in the Cape Colony. The area was annexed, becoming the British Colony of Natal in 1843. Durban is currently the largest city in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

accomplishments. “Not least of these accomplishments was his ability to handle the African – mostly Zulu – farm workers” (Roberts 1988, 12). Getting the “Kaffirs⁹” to work was easy, Cecil explained in one of the earliest letters he sent home to England. As a means of securing the plantation’s labor force, he doled out loans in the form of wage advances. Black farm workers used these loans to pay the annual hut tax initially levied by Natal’s British colonial government in 1849. In addition to poll taxes, marriage taxes, and even a dog tax of five shillings per animal, these measures were implemented throughout Britain’s African colonies as a means of driving the native population into the labor force. They were based solely on one’s existence in society, and “[b]ecause the tax was not based on the ability to pay, the introduction of the Hut tax...precipitated an outflow of labour to South African mines and farms and began a process of colonial capitalist underdevelopment...” (Mogalakwe 2006, 76) With increased pressure from white settlers, the hut tax was doubled to fourteen shillings in 1875, again “in the hopes of forcing more Africans into wage labor (at low wages) on white-owned farms...” such as the one belonging to the Rhodes brothers (Redding 2006, 97).

Though slavery was abolished in nearly all British colonies (including Natal) by the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, Black South Africans were coerced into finding employment in order to secure the funds necessary to pay the hut tax. Additional controls on Black labor were codified in Kaffir Employment Act No. 27 that passed in 1857. It “stipulated that Xhosa had fourteen days to find employment after the expiration of a contract” (Crais 1992, 194). By extending loans to the plantation’s farm workers, Cecil was able to capitalize on the proletarianization of Black southern Africans crystalized through the discriminatory legislation described above. “...In his opinion, [the loans were] a good investment. Not only did it secure

⁹ Derogatory term used to refer to Black South Africans. In South Africa, the word kaffir carries a connotation similar to that of the slur “nigger” in the United States.

the farm labour but it helped an employer's reputation...He discovered that men could be bound by purse strings: and the longer the strings, the more securely they were tied – both physically and mentally” (Roberts 1988, 13).

Cecil continued his machinations on the plantation. On May 25, 1871, the Pietermaritzburg Agricultural Society awarded him the second place prize of £5 for his entry of a half-bale of cotton. Meanwhile, the expansion of the diamond diggings in the interior prompted more and more farmers to leave Natal for opportunities further inland. Newly validated in his abilities as a cotton planter, Cecil was hesitant in boarding the bandwagon. In another letter sent to his parents in England, he conveyed the following reservations:

Of course there is a chance of the diamonds turning out trumps; but I don't count much from them. You see it is all chance. Herbert may find one or he may find one of a hundred carats: it is a toss up. But cotton, the more you see of it, the more I am sure it is a reality. Not a fortune, and not attainable by every one; but still, to one who has a good bit of land, money to start it properly, a fair road, and, above all, a good name amongst the Kaffirs, a very pleasant income. (Roberts 1988, 13)

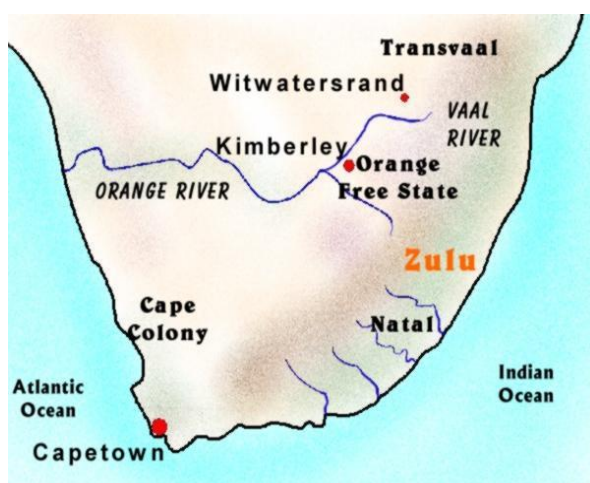


Figure 1.1 Map of South Africa circa 1870

The tides turned with the additional discovery of diamonds on the Colesberg kopje¹⁰ located on the de Beers brothers' farm, Vooruitzicht, in July 1871. With this announcement, the rush began in earnest – so much so that the area encompassing the diamond fields, located at the confluence of the Vaal and Orange Rivers, was widely referred to as New Rush. The diamond

¹⁰ Dutch and Afrikaans term for a hill typically surrounded by a flat land

fields lay naturally within the borders of the Orange Free State¹¹. Yet Transvaal¹², the Cape Colony¹³, and the Griqua peoples all claimed ownership of the area. The Griqua were an Afrikaans-speaking seminomadic group of mixed Khoikhoi, Tswana, and European ancestry. Moving regularly through the area that made up New Rush with their herd, their nomadism further complicated the dispute over ownership of the region. Sir Henry Barkly, governor of the Colony of Natal, mediated the proceedings. He ultimately sided with Griqua chief Nicolaas Waterboer, angering both Boer republics. The territory was named Griqualand West and, unsurprisingly, became a British colony shortly thereafter. New Rush would later be named for British Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley in 1873.

Herbert Rhodes was among the first to stake out claims in the new diggings that emerged immediately following the Vooruitzicht discoveries during the summer of 1871. His luck was instantaneous. In the first reports of the findings at New Rush, “Mr. Rhodes of Natal” was said to have found 110 carats worth of diamonds. Some of the individual stones were as large as 28 carats. Once the last of the cotton crop was sold – for a meager price – Cecil decided to join his brother. He embarked on the month-long 400-mile journey northwest by ox-wagon, all the while encountering terrain much more dry and rugged than Durban’s subtropical climate.

¹¹ Sovereign Boer republic (1854-1902) settled by Afrikaner emigres escaping British rule in the Cape Colony. The Orange Free Stated was annexed by Britain in 1902 upon the conclusion of the Second Anglo-Boer War

¹² Also known as the South African Republic, Transvaal was a sovereign, internationally recognized country (1852-1902) in the southern part of Africa. Transvaal was similarly settled by Afrikaner emigres escaping British rule in the Cape Colony. The South African Republic was annexed by Britain in 1902 and became the Transvaal Colony. In 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) dismantled the area and renamed it Gauteng. Gauteng Province is home to the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria (seat of the South African government’s executive branch)

¹³ Officially named the Cape of Good Hope, the Cape Colony was founded by the Dutch East India Company in 1652. After their defeat in the Battle of Muizenberg, the Cape came under British control in 1795. The colony consisted of parts of the present day provinces of the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, as well as the country of Namibia.

Kimberley

Arriving at the height of the rush in November of 1871, Cecil Rhodes was most likely taken aback by the scene that awaited him:

The people were rough. Prospectors of every nationality, class and calling. Hardened veterans from Klondyke, Ballarat and Colorado; deserters from the army, navy and merchant service; runaway clerks looking for adventure; younger sons of the gentry, officers on furlough, professional men who had abandoned their professions, all looking for a quick fortune... And the riff-raff; thieves, whores and professional gamblers. All, or most of these, were white...Life was very primitive. Most of the whites lived in tents. Provisions were limited...[and] there was a perpetual shortage of water. (Marlowe 1972, 56)

Tens of thousands had flocked to the Griqualand diggings, including white settlers and venture capitalists, as well as a number of indigenous southern Africans. Black workers performed most of the (often dangerous) manual labor necessary for mining, and a small number of them held claims of their own. As there was already an overabundance of competition, this proved to be a threat to white diggers. After several riots, an all-white diggers' committee formed in 1872. Their aim: to exclude Black diggers, make it possible for them to be searched without a warrant, and subject those found in possession of diamonds to a punishment of fifty lashes (Thompson 2001, 118). Ensuing proclamations issued by the British high commissioner made it so that "[a]ny black person was de facto excluded from owning diamond claims or trading in diamonds and was liable to imprisonment or corporal punishment if found 'in precincts of the camp without a pass signed by his master or by a magistrate'" (Thompson 2001, 118). In Kimberly, an industrial system predicated on the exclusion of Africans from the process of accumulating wealth was established with the same negative implications Marx had decried in England just two decades prior:

...[T]he discovery of diamonds had brought to South Africa the industrial problems of the nineteenth century – the conflicts between capital and labour, the insecurities of the artisans and the unskilled workers, and the rootlessness of the masses. This in terms of the country's racial composition, meant a sharpening of the divisions between the white and the black man. (Roberts 1988, 30-31)

Within the South African context, however, the class divide was largely rooted in, and compacted by, racial discrimination.

Black mine workers provided the cheap labor needed to maximize profits in the fledgling but growing diamond industry, yet their presence engendered incredible hostility and scrutiny. They were required to carry passes. Prohibited from residing in town, Black diggers “liv[ed] in an embryonic form of apartheid round the outskirts of the township” (Marlowe 1972, 56). Though apartheid is commonly associated with the re-ascension of the Afrikaner-dominated National Party in 1948, several of its controversial policies were well underway in 19th century Kimberley. In fact, as early as the first European arrivals at the Cape during the 17th century, a nascent form of racial segregation had already been instigated with the ever increasing encroachment upon – and outright annexation of – native lands.

As a white settler, Cecil Rhodes was not subject to such restrictive measures. Though he was not individually responsible for the legal and economic structures designed with the express purpose of marginalizing the native population, he most certainly benefited. Later in his career (during his tenure as prime minister of the Cape Colony), however, Rhodes would enact legislation intended to similarly disenfranchise the more populous groups of native South Africans. In this contentious atmosphere, Cecil went into business with his brother, just as he had done in Natal. Taking over one of Herbert's three claims, he extracted nearly thirty carats of diamonds each week. The one claim generated a handsome weekly income of £100.

New Rush was a far cry from the farming community that Cecil had left behind in Natal. Nevertheless, he quickly made a name (and a home) for himself amongst the diggers. He became fast friends with Charles Rudd, who, several years his senior, had similarly traveled to South Africa to join his brother's trading business upon completing his studies at Cambridge. When the restive Herbert took off again – just a few weeks after Cecil's arrival in Griqualand – leaving an eighteen year old Cecil in sole charge of three diamond claims, Rudd was more than willing to assist Rhodes in managing them. Charles Rudd would eventually become Rhodes' foremost business associate.

Though Cecil's health fared much better in southern Africa than it did in England, the poor living conditions in the tent cities that sprang up at the mines did not help matters. Combined with the taxing effects of stress and overexertion, he suffered his first heart attack in 1872. Recovering at the home of J.B. Currey (personal friend and administrative secretary of Griqualand West), Cecil read the recently published *Martyrdom of Man* by Winwood Reade. Reade was a well-known Social Darwinist. His earlier work, *Savage Africa* (1864), prophesied the allocation of the entire continent between Great Britain and France as well as the extinction of Black Africans (Reade 1864, 432). "Proved to be the most mischievous of the perversions of Darwinism" (Marlowe 1972, 58), *The Martyrdom of Man* popularized the idea of the European race's inherent superiority over all others. Their burden was to carry out the mission of bringing science and civilization to Africa. Based on his travels through western and southern regions of the continent (including the Cape Colony), and calling on the work of E.B. Tylor, Reade's works were regarded for their anthropological qualities (Fleming 2003). In years to come Rhodes would maintain that *The Martyrdom of Man* "has made me what I am" (Marlowe 1972, 58). This book would indeed provide the foundation for the pseudo-philosophy on which he built his earliest

visions of empire. His time at Oxford would only provide further justification for his self-aggrandizing dreams.

Nearly a year after leaving the diamond fields, Herbert returned to Griqualand – with their older brother, Frank Rhodes, in tow – having sold the farm at Natal. Cecil invested his share of the profits in the new railroad that was to traverse the region. Arguing that the country air would prove more beneficial than that of the rapidly urbanizing Kimberley, Herbert dragged Cecil on a trip into northwest Transvaal. They left the diamond claims under the careful management of Charles Rudd and their brother, Frank. Herbert's true motivation for embarking on this trip was to substantiate reports of a gold strike at Marastabad¹⁴. Their search was unfruitful. The two brothers returned to Kimberley after two months in the Boer republic.

Herbert's dreams for the country to be found north of Kimberley had not abated fully, however. He decided to sell his claims in anticipation of his next adventure. Already worth well over £5000 at just twenty years of age, Cecil, joined by Charles Rudd, bought out his brother. But Cecil, too, had a dream to fulfill; the lifelong dream of matriculating from the University of Oxford as countless generations of influential Englishmen have done. Cecil and Frank soon sailed to England, the former entrusting his business interests with his partner, Rudd. Herbert returned to Transvaal, again in search of gold. He would spend his last days there. After years of rootlessness, he was claimed in his sleep by a sudden tent fire.

The Oxford Years

Cecil Rhodes' initial pecuniary motivations were deeply rooted in his dreams of establishing himself at Oxford. A gentleman by birth, he felt that he had been robbed of a *true*

¹⁴ District in Transvaal

gentleman's education: For reasons of poor health – or perhaps due to the diminished resources available to him as a younger son – Cecil attended the local day school rather than the more prestigious institutions, like Winchester and Eton, from which his older brothers matriculated. He was convinced that studying at Oxford would lend him the sophistication and skill, the authoritative varnish, required of a truly distinguished English gentleman. “The Oxford system in its most finished form looks very unpractical,” Rhodes remarked, “...yet, wherever you turn your eye, except in science, an Oxford man is at the top of the tree” (Marlowe 1972, 60).

Unfortunately, Rhodes' near obsessive enthusiasm was not enough to secure him a place among the University's intellectual elite. Though he read extensively between his responsibilities in Natal and Kimberley, these “somewhat superficial” (Marlowe 1972, 59) readings were a poor substitute for years of academic neglect. Rhodes was rejected from University College after failing the Latin entry examinations. He was advised to try his luck at Oxford's Oriel College where “they were not so particular” (Marlowe 1972, 60). Oriel's Provost admitted Rhodes, stating “all the Colleges send me their failures” (Marlowe 1972, 60).

Rhodes began his first stint at Oxford in 1873. He returned to Kimberley after the term and would not resume his studies until 1876. Rhodes was a rather unremarkable student. Though he took great interest in politics and resolved to enter the law profession, he never took the bar examination. Rhodes did not reside at the University and seldom attended lectures. One of his tutors would later remark that “[h]e belonged to a set of men like himself, not caring for distinction in the schools and not working for them, but of refined tastes...” (Roberts 1988, 24). Rhodes' social awkwardness did little to endear him to the other undergraduates. Still, he did

manage to make friends, and at least two of his fellow students eventually joined his enterprises in Africa.

Leading the double life of a diamond magnate and student proved to be a difficult and time consuming endeavor, even for Rhodes. His career at Oxford spanned eight years; his time in England was interspersed with frequent trips to southern Africa to assist Rudd with their growing business. On one such visit, he suffered another heart attack, the severity of which prompted him to draw up a will. The will stipulated that his bequest be used for the establishment of a secret society given over to:

The extension of British rule throughout the world... the colonization by British subjects of all lands where the means of livelihood are attainable by energy, labour and enterprise, and especially the occupation by British settlers of the entire Continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the Valley of the Euphrates, the islands of Cyprus and Candia, the whole of South America, the islands of the Pacific not heretofore possessed by Great Britain, the whole of the Malay Archipelago, the sea-board of China and Japan, [and] the ultimate recovery of the United States of America as an integral part of the British Empire... (Marlowe 1972, 65)

Upon returning to Oxford to complete his studies, Rhodes' grandiose notions of empire would be further encouraged by the message John Ruskin delivered in his inaugural lecture:

This is what England either must either do or perish: she must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men; seizing every piece of fruitful waste ground she can set her feet on... If we can get men, for little pay, to cast themselves against the cannon-mouths for England, we may find men who will plough and sow for her, and will bring up their children to love her... (Roberts 1988, 27)

Though Rhodes did not make a great impact on Oxford as a student, the institution undeniably played a crucial role in shaping the jingoist social attitudes on which he fashioned his personal philosophies and life's work. In death his name would be unequivocally associated with the University through the £100,000 sum bequeathed for the construction of new College buildings with additional directives and capital set aside for the establishment of one of the world's first

international scholarship schemes. Rhodes' time at Oxford afforded him the self-assurance that would facilitate his financial and political ascendancy.

Financing Imperial Schemes

By 1885, Rhodes had established himself as chairman of the de Beers Company, gaining ownership of the entire de Beers mine in 1887. As with earlier practices on the farms in Natal, Rhodes used his financial power to manipulate the native labor force: "Amalgamated ownership had enabled the de Beers Co. to introduce the system – later applied to the whole fields – of 'compounding' native labour – that is to say, of housing them, feeding them, and searching them in compounds under the company's control and isolating them from outside contacts" (Marlowe 1972, 95). At the same time, an increase in production due to amalgamation and improvements in mining technologies, as well as an inelastic market, contributed to a depression in diamond prices. Rhodes sought to establish a complete monopoly of the diamond mining industry so as to have greater control over the price of diamonds. Such would also provide him with the "means of financing his own schemes" (Marlowe 1972, 95). With support from Rothschild and Hamburg in London – to the tune of £750,000 each for a total of £1,400,000 – Rhodes succeeds in buying up all of the remaining smaller mines and claims in the area.

Barney Barnato and his operation, Kimberly Central, remained the sole obstacle to Rhodes' plans. He soon cajoled his biggest competitor into merging their two companies, however. Both men, joined by Alfred Beit and Philipson Stow (Rhodes' largest backers) became life governors of the de Beers Consolidated Mines. The new corporation "owned 90 percent of

the world's production of diamonds.”¹⁵ The company's trust deed also provided them with unprecedented imperial power:

Powers...as extensive as those of any Company that ever existed...They are empowered to annex a portion of territory in Central Africa, raise and maintain a standing army and undertake warlike operations....undertake financial operations for foreign governments, carry on diamond mining, coal mining or gold mining in any part of the world. It can carry on banking in Africa or elsewhere, and can become a water company in Cape Colony or elsewhere. (Marlowe 1972, 99)

Rhodes bought out Stow's shares in 1892 and divided the remaining shares between himself and Beit when Barnato died in 1895. He would use the wealth generated from this enterprise to finance a number of wars against the African kingdoms north of Transvaal and the Cape Colony. Encompassing nearly all of present day Zimbabwe, he would name the land that he stole from the Ndebele (in the name of British imperialism) Rhodesia.

A Historiography of Rhodes

For someone who has arrested public imagination as thoroughly as Cecil Rhodes has done, there have been surprisingly few academic efforts that accurately represent the larger effects of his self-aggrandizing policies in Africa. In Paul Maylam¹⁶'s address commemorating the centennial anniversary of Rhodes' death – fittingly delivered at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa – he bemoaned the substandard content that characterizes existing Rhodes biographies: “There is a great deal of rehashing and recycling from one work to another. One is struck more by the quantity of biographies than their quality” (Maylam 2002, 141).

¹⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Cecil Rhodes," last modified January 15, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Cecil-Rhodes>.

¹⁶ Paul Maylam is the Professor Emeritus of history at Rhodes University in South Africa's Eastern Cape. His work centers on South African urban history with a particular focus on apartheid and the historiography of racism.

According to Maylam, these biographies fall into three categories: those early texts, written by friends and family, which exalt Rhodes as a patriot and visionary; the more critical works that denounce his imperial mission as a self-serving means of accumulating wealth and power; and the biographers that opt for the more conciliatory middle ground, maintaining that Rhodes' misadventures must be understood within the context of his time.

Most biographies of Rhodes belong to this third category and are characterized by an overwhelmingly apologetic tone. Mensing's essay, *Cecil Rhodes's Ideas of Race and Empire* (1986), presents the following statement, uttered by Rhodes himself, as an example of his attitude towards Africans: "We have got to treat natives, where they are in a state of barbarism, in a different way to ourselves. We are to be lords over them." (Mensing 1986, 103) This statement provides clear evidence of Rhodes' prejudiced outlook and yet, further down the very same page, Mensing argues: "Rhodes's positions and pronouncements do not, however, suggest that he was a thoroughgoing racist" (Mensing 1986, 103).

The following excerpt from Brian Roberts' book, *Cecil Rhodes: Flawed Colossus* (1988), serves as yet another example of the lengths to which scholars are willing to go to protect Rhodes' legacy:

What idealistic young Englishman could resist so stirring, so reasonable, so unselfish, and above all, so romantic a call? Certainly not Cecil John Rhodes. In later life he was to admit how much he owed to Ruskin's inspiring message. For despite his eminently practical outlook, his shrewd business sense, his ruthless political manoeuvrings, his often cold-blooded machinations, Cecil Rhodes always maintained something of the idealism of youth. With his personality unresolved, he used the British empire as an emotional outlet, dedicating his entire life to the imperial ideals imbibed as a young man at Oxford. (Roberts, 1988, 27)

Though the title implies a much more critical view, Roberts' position embodies the conservatism with which most historians and biographers have approached the task of remembering Rhodes. Published in 1986 and 1988 respectively – at the height of the international community's denouncement of South Africa's apartheid regime, and, consequently, at a time where many social scientists were demonstrating the many ways in which the racist ideologies of European colonialism precipitated and justified apartheid practices – Mensing and Roberts' arguments appear all the more irrational and disturbing. These authors are not alone in their attempts at rationalizing Rhodes' hideous misadventures in South Africa, however. In fact, their temporally-bound, apologetic outlook has survived well into the turn of the century. Professor Zine Magubane is a professor of sociology at UCT and is currently guest lecturing at Boston College. She made the following remarks about the preservation of Rhodes' legacy in response to the recent Rhodes Must Fall movement at UCT:

Take the issue of Rhodes' legacy, for example. We are still having discussions where he is called a "humanitarian" or an "entrepreneur"! This, about a person who said that he "preferred land to niggers!" To enter into scholarly dialogue means having not only to engage with things that insult you and your history in very profound ways but also to have to write through and against them. This is not easy.¹⁷

In his address, Maylam makes the crucial distinction that "historians must have empathy and be finely attuned to context, but showing too much empathy can exonerate just about any historical figure" (Maylam 2002, 141). Cecil Rhodes is not the drunken uncle or absent-minded grandfather making insensitive comments at the Thanksgiving dinner table; He was an extremely powerful man who intentionally used his wealth and political position to enact policies that produced lasting material effects on millions of Black and Coloured South Africans and their

¹⁷ Bates, Annwen, "No Longer Watching Over Heath and Man," *Your Sculpture Blog*, May 28, 2015, <https://yoursculpture.wordpress.com/2015/05/28/no-longer-watching-over-heath-or-man/>.

descendants. During Rhodes' tenure as prime minister of the Cape Colony, he orchestrated and passed several legislative measures intended to solve the "Native question":

Does this house think it is right that men in a state of pure barbarism should have the franchise and vote? The natives do not want it... I will lay down my own policy on this native question. Either you have to receive them on equal footing as citizens or call them a subject race. Well, I have made up my mind that there must be class legislation, there must be Pass Laws and Peace Preservation Acts, and that we have got to treat the natives, where they are in a state of barbarism, in a different way to ourselves. We are to be lords over them. These are my politics on native affairs, and these are the politics of South Africa. (Marlowe 1972, 9)

The most pernicious of the "solutions," alluded to in the rousing, 100-minute speech Rhodes delivered to the Parliament of Cape Town, were codified in the Franchise and Ballot Act (1892) and the Glen Gray Act (1895). The first served to literally disenfranchise the native population by hinging their ability to vote on financial and educational qualifications. The Glen Gray Act, intended to again "force more Africans into the wage-labour market, a pursuit which would undoubtedly also help [him] in his own mining claims in Kimberley and the Transvaal."¹⁸ With additional stipulations pertaining landownership and residential rights, this Act has been described as the "blueprint for the Apartheid regime that was to come."¹⁹

Understanding the Present through the Past

War and especially civil strife leave terrible wounds. It is the duty of humanity to heal them. It was therefore soon conceived as neither wise nor patriotic to speak of all the causes of strife and the terrible results to which national differences... [have] led... But are these reasons of courtesy and philanthropy sufficient for denying Truth?" If history is going to be scientific, if the record of human action is going to be set down with the accuracy and faithfulness of detail which will allow its use as a measuring rod and guidepost for the future of nations, there must be set some standards of ethics in research and interpretation. If, on the other hand, we are going to use history for our pleasure and amusement, for inflating our national ego, and giving us a false but pleasurable sense of accomplishment, then we must give up the idea of history as a science or as an art using

¹⁸ "Cecil John Rhodes," *SAhistory.org.za*, last modified March 9, 2016, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/cecil-john-rhodes>

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

the results of science, and admit frankly that we are using a version of historic fact in order to influence and educate the new generation along the way we wish. (DuBois 2013, 636-37)

Taken from the final chapter – aptly titled *The Propaganda of History* – of W.E.B DuBois’ seminal work, *Black Reconstruction*, this excerpt provides a powerful critique of the seemingly insurmountable urge to sanitize unpleasant histories and its past figures. Though DuBois’ historiography addresses the failure of economic transformation for Blacks and poor whites following the American Civil War, his thoughts can reasonably be applied to the post-apartheid South African state. The “terrible wounds” of colonialism, slavery, and apartheid continue to haunt the South African landscape. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in Cape Town – capital of the former Cape Colony, and home to Rhodes’ expansive Groote Schuur estate as well as the smaller beachfront cottage where he eventually passed. Persisting as the most racially segregated city in South Africa, Cape Town is a city that “struggles under the weight of history” (Shepherd 240). Its present day inhabitants continue to “encounter one another through the prism of apartheid city planning and racialized identities” (Shepherd 2012, 240).

I bore witness to these persisting inequalities throughout my semester abroad in Cape Town during the summer and fall (South African winter and spring) of 2014. Less than a month into our stay, our program, International Studies Abroad (ISA), took its students on a weekend “excursion” to Gugulethu. Located approximately fifteen kilometers from Cape Town, the township of Gugulethu was created during the 1960s to relieve overcrowding from the neighboring township, Langa. Under apartheid, it was illegal for people of color to reside in the city of Cape Town proper. The tens of thousands of residents forcibly removed from District Six, and other areas, were resettled in substandard government housing projects in Langa, Nyanga, and Gugulethu.

Two minibuses pulled into Gugulethu that early August afternoon. Their occupants, excepting myself and three other students, were overwhelmingly White American. Driving along “Native Yard One” (NY1)²⁰, the township’s main road, a horrified reverence silenced the chatter that began upon departing our student apartments in Cape Town just twenty minutes before. While some students failed to position Gugulethu within the durational nature of apartheid’s segregational practices, the low and squat buildings – crammed closely together, distinguishable only by the color of their adorning corrugated metal – unmistakably bespoke poverty. After a communal welcome session, we were paired off to our “host mothers”.

Hailing from Chicago’s affluent North Shore, Claire, my roommate for the weekend, was determined to despise everything Mama Nosentu presented us with. She peppered me with questions about the food our host family prepared for us – the staple dish, *umpoqhoko* – as if my Blackness inherently leant me a deeper knowledge of Xhosa cuisine (other than the obvious supposition that our failure to finish it would cause serious offense). “How do they live like this?” she would later ask, emboldened in the privacy of our room. Unable to make out her features in the darkness, I mistakenly assumed that her question was rhetorical. “Do you think it’s because Mama Nosentu never got an education?”

Without getting into the complex and dastardly implications that accompany the commodification of a great historical injustice for the voyeuristic purposes of “educational tourism,” Claire’s well-intended questions illustrate the danger of simplified, temporally bound historical narratives. Instead of recognizing the larger structures – in this case a repressive

²⁰ During apartheid, township streets were not given real names and were instead labeled Native Yard and an assigned number. In 2012, NY1 was renamed Steve Biko Drive in honor of the prominent anti-apartheid activist who had been assassinated by apartheid police in 1977. Despite the two years that had elapsed since the name change at the time of my visit in 2014, the use of NY terminology persists among the township’s residents.

political environment – that have actively prevented Black and Coloured South Africans from participating in any meaningful educational or economic activity, Mama Nosentu’s present circumstances are reduced to personal failings. Claire’s questions also demonstrate a failure in memory that Connerton would attribute to the undervaluing of history in our modern educational systems:

[T]o judge from the virtual disappearance of narrative history from the curriculum of many school systems, including the American, the time may soon come when, for many citizens, large parts of their common past will constitute something more akin to *lieux d’oubli*, realms of forgetting – or rather, realms of ignorance, since there will have been little to forget. (Connerton 2009, 3).

For those who have taken on the monumental task of digging through South African colonial history – and Rhodes’ place among that history – their discoveries have come as a total shock. Antony Thomas is a British documentary filmmaker who wrote the screenplay for the 1996 BBC television mini-series, *Rhodes: The Life and Legend of Cecil Rhodes*. Born in Calcutta, Thomas lived in Cape Town between the ages of six and twenty-seven. Like many artists, activists, and activist-artists, he was exiled from South Africa and relocated to England in 1967. In a promotional interview for the new show, Thomas explained how the shift in his own personal views about Rhodes has influenced and informed the new cinematic rendering:

For my grandparents, who were Edwardians, he was a symbol of everything that was fine about their tradition, and everything that was noble about being British. I was taught to thank God every night in my prayers for making me English. He was the patron saint of my childhood. I remember standing in the Cape Gardens to see his statue, and feeling the same reverence a Catholic child might feel if they were being taken to see a statue of the Virgin. He had that kind of importance in our lives.²¹

²¹ Ivan Waterman, “BBC Unveils A Victorian Hero - A Money-Mad, Racist, Closet Gay,” *The Independent*, July 27, 1996, accessed October 7, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/bbc-unveils-a-victorian-hero-a-money-mad-racist-closet-gay-1330823.html>.

Asked to direct his first documentary on Rhodes in 1970, Antony Thomas was taken aback by what he found:

The weeks and months I spent studying biographies, letters, speeches, diaries and articles became a descent into evil. He stole one million square miles of Africa. His imperial notions were very much a facade. He was primarily driven by personal ambition and a craving for wealth. What is dreadful about him is the nature of his journey. When he set out for Africa he had this understanding and respect for the landscape. But he was willing to adopt the racist policies of the Afrikaners in their most extreme form. He succeeded, however, not only in having Rhodesia named after him, and the Oxford scholarships from which Bill Clinton, for one, benefited, but in giving loud voice to his dreams of a white-controlled African continent, beginning with enforced segregation in South Africa itself; he allowed the newspapers he controlled to publish openly racist views and he set up the first black reserves, the forerunners of the ‘tribal homelands’.²²

Even where memory has failed, one need only turn to the plight of present-day mine workers in South Africa to remind themselves of the persisting negative implications of Rhodes’ legacy. In 2012, the South African mining industry (largely foreign-owned, of course) came under literal fire after thirty-four workers were killed for protesting low wages and deplorable working conditions. An additional seventy-eight were wounded. The Marikana Massacre – alluded to throughout the Rhodes Must Fall movement – followed a week of intense protest during which 3,000 Lonmin employees went on strike. Lonmin, formerly known as LonRho (London and Rhodesian Mining and Land Company Limited), is a British mining company that operates in South Africa. They have been widely criticized for exploiting their workers, fostering an environment of rampant inequality that contributed to the unrest. “The concern is that private corporations, often with the support of government leaders, make very large profits while communities suffer high levels of inequality and poverty. The situation in Marikana testifies to this,” Jo Seoka, chairperson of the Bench Marks Foundation said. “The killing of over 30

²² Waterman, “BBC Unveils Victorian Hero.”

workers,” up to 44 after an additional ten strikers were killed in the week following the initial bloodshed, “and the quietness of Lonmin in all of this is truly shocking.”²³

In the three years that have passed since Marikana, very little has changed for South African mine workers. While Lonmin did eventually settle, conceding to a basic monthly salary of R12,500 (\$968 USD)²⁴ for its employees, very few workers are earning this wage. The South African police force has been criticized for its role in the killings; however, little has been done to address their wrongdoing despite Amnesty International’s calls for the suspension of the officers involved. Meanwhile, the families of the deceased are still embroiled in what is sure to be a longstanding legal battle. Lungisile Madwansi, a Marikana survivor, describes the ongoing struggle in a recent interview with Al Jazeera:

I was shot in the head; our brothers died. But the struggle for 12,500 rand is not over. The Farlam Commission [a government-run inquiry into the massacre] was just a waste of time; it did not find anything wrong with what the government did. But [South African President Jacob] Zuma, and [police commissioner] Riah Phiyega are responsible for the deaths, and they must be accountable.²⁵

The tragedy of Marikana is a clear example of the durational nature of colonial and imperial oppression. These conditions did not materialize out of nothing, and can be traced to the very beginnings of the mining industry, where the unequal division of labor set off a cycle of poverty that continues to trap hundreds of thousands of mineworkers in exploitative situations. In

²³ “Slaughter at South Africa's Marikana Mine: The Bloody Politics of Platinum,” *Socialist Worker*, August 17, 2012, accessed March 12, 2016, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/28824/Slaughter+at+South+Africas+Marikana+mine%3A+the+bloody+politics+of+platinum>.

²⁴ “Lonmin an Example of Exploitation,” *Independent Online*, August 17, 2012, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.iol.co.za/business/companies/lonmin-an-example-of-exploitation-1365221#.UC-w5d11S19>.

²⁵ Tendai Marima, “After Marikana, Little Has Changed for Miners,” *Al Jazeera*, August 20, 2015, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/08/marikana-changed-miners-150820071546058.html>.

questioning Rhodes' legacy, the students involved in the Rhodes Must Fall protests are actively demonstrating how memories of struggle are very much alive in the present.

Chapter 2 Remembering Rhodes

“Rhodes was a dick. This wasn’t a cool guy, and this is not someone we should be valorizing in this way.” – James Clacherty, UCT student



Figure 2.1 Aerial view of the University of Cape Town's upper campus (and some of middle campus)

It was my first day as an exchange student at the University of Cape Town. Nervous, lost, and feeling like a first-year all over again, I opted not to take the Jammie shuttle to upper campus for fear of ending up ending up somewhere I was not supposed to be. After my morning class at the

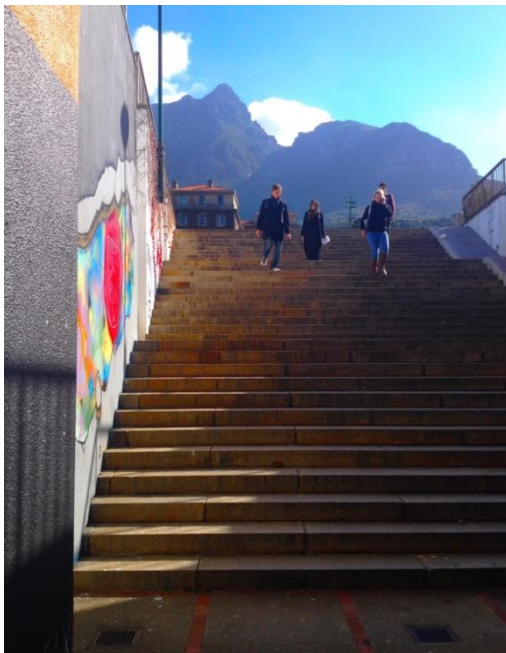
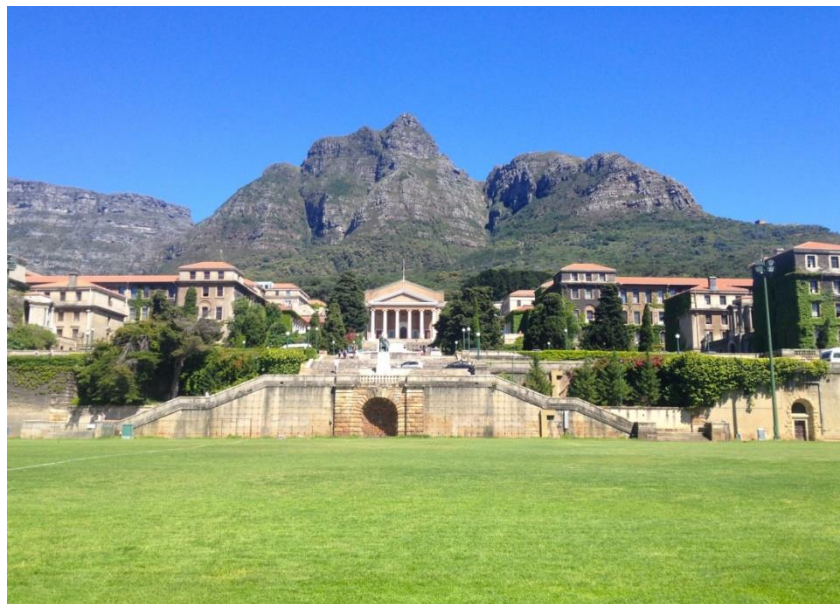


Figure 2.2 Exiting the pedestrian tunnel under Rhodes Drive.

College of Music, I made the uphill trek from lower campus by foot. Up the sidewalk, past the squash courts, and across the footbridge over Woolsack Drive I went. Then it was around the cricket pavilion, through the School of Economics, and beyond the Kramer Law Building to complete my traversal of middle campus.

The subterranean pedestrian tunnel took me beneath the busy M3 (Metropolitan Route) expressway, Rhodes Drive, which separated middle and upper campus. The darkened tunnel was made brighter by the colorful

flyers, murals and graffiti painted along its walls. Finally, the bright light at the top of the stairs signaled my (almost) arrival.



Emerging into the blinding sunshine, I exited the tunnel at the edge of the expansive rugby fields. I followed the path already worn into the grass, and ascended the stone staircase on my left. Crossing Madiba circle – renamed in

Figure 2.3 View of UCT's upper campus from the rugby fields

2014 to commemorate the passing of former South African President, Nelson Mandela – I found myself at the bottom of yet another set of steps even more grand than the last. With the Palladian architecture of Jameson Hall (a domeless reinterpretation of the University of Virginia's Rotunda) – and the even more imposing, yet scenic, slope of Devil's Peak looming in the background – I barely registered the statue at the top of the steps at first. Mentally cataloguing my surroundings with the voracious gaze of a stranger and newcomer, however, my eyes eventually alighted on the statue.

Even with my meagre understanding of South African history, I could not help but to wonder why I was looking at a statue of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town. Disjunctive as that initial sighting was, the statue's presence soon disappeared from my conscious perception, melting into the structure of the University like a tree, a step, or any number of its mundane adornments. Other UCT students relayed similar experiences:

James: Personally, I can't say I paid much attention to the statue that much at all until I went to a debate that the UCT Debating Society held a few months before the whole Rhodes Must Fall movement really began... The statue was a neutral, benign, almost invisible thing in my life until I got conscientized to the real significance of it.

Ntsika: When I came to UCT, I used to like making fun of the statue just because it didn't actually even look like Cecil John Rhodes very much. I remember climbing on the statue and swiping his face a couple of times, just as a joke. But after a while, it really becomes part of the University, so you don't see it very much until moments like [the Rhodes Must Fall movement] happen.

The Statue as “Silent Text”²⁶

From marble representations of Greco-Roman deities to the larger-than-life bronzes of Soviet leaders still being toppled in Eastern Europe today, since antiquity, statues have served as celebratory symbols of the status and importance of the individuals for whom they have been created. George Villiers, 6th Earl of Clarendon and British politician who served as Governor General of the Union of South Africa from 1931 to 1937, commissioned this particular statue of Rhodes. It was financed by the Rhodes National South African Memorial Committee. Donated to the University in 1934, the sculpture was completed by British artist, Marion Walgate. Her husband, Percival, was the assistant to British architect Sir Henry Baker, who – in addition to designing a number of colonial era buildings in South Africa and India – personally remodeled Rhodes' Cape Town residence at Groote Schuur. The University of Cape Town's main campus, which bears the same name, is currently located on Rhodes' estate.

Just as Clifford Geertz referred to culture as text, Goodman Gwasira²⁷ maintains that through historical archaeology, the “hidden meanings” behind artifacts can be deciphered by “reading them as silent texts” (Gwasira 2001, 88). Where a statue is located is an important

²⁶ Goodman Gwasira, “Reading Between the Lines: Monuments as Metaphors,” *South African Field Archaeology* (2001): 88.

²⁷ Professor of geography, cultural history, and environmental studies at the University of Namibia

conveyer of meaning, for, “[a]s with all public sculpture, location is intrinsic to its impact and character” (Byrne 2015, 501).



The Rhodes statue has resided in various locations on UCT’s main campus over the decades. It was moved to its prominent perch atop the Jameson steps in 1996. As I previously

Figure 2.4 Rhodes Statue set against the backdrop of upper campus

described, this incredibly high traffic area serves as the entry point to the University of Cape Town’s upper campus. According to J.B. Solomon’s original blueprints, this location is also the campus’ central axis. Interestingly enough, Solomon, the architect behind the design of the University of Cape Town’s main campus, began his career with Sir Henry Baker’s architectural firm. Quoting Katey Goodwin, Annwen Bates comments on the tangled convergence of insourced privilege in the following passage:

These connections between Rhodes, Baker, the Walgates and Solomon underscore the stronghold a notably British-Imperialist visual legacy held over architecture, public space and the representation of patriotic identity in South Africa at the end of the nineteenth and in the first part of the twentieth century. In quarters, this visual legacy still resonates even in the post-Apartheid democracy of twenty-first century South Africa.²⁸

If we are to accept John Byrne’s assertion that the setting of a monument is fundamental to its impact, then we can reasonably speculate that the decision to relocate the Rhodes statue to this particular place was a deliberate one. “At the moment when names are assigned to places,

²⁸ Bates, “No Longer Watching Over Heath and Man.”

those who do the naming are often particularly aware of the memories they wish to impose” (Connerton 2009). Connerton further illustrates his point using the example of the renaming of streets, buildings, calendars – and the erection of new statues and monuments – that occurred during the French Revolution. “The ideal now was to represent the Revolution as the origin of History; the only memory that mattered was that of the objectives to be accomplished in the Future, the ideals, and therefore the toponyms, of the Rights of Man, Union Law, the Sansculottes” (Connerton 2009, 12). I would argue that this repurposing, as it were, is not unique to the French Revolution, but rather signals, if not typifies, a change in Order. That the Rhodes Statue was relocated in 1996 – just two years into the transference of political power from the white supremacist Afrikaner National Party to what was at the time the party of Black liberation, the African National Congress – is a curious reversal of this trend. Irrespective of the reasoning behind the decision to relocate the Rhodes statue, the act of placing it atop the Jameson steps sends the message that this is an important object, and by extension, an important man. Itself a monument to Rhodes, the statue is also a conveyor of memory. With Rhodes, this memory is inseparable from the history of British colonialism and imperialism.

From the Jammie steps, one can follow the statue’s line of vision gazing admiringly over the activity below. I sat further up on those steps – shaded by one of Jameson Hall’s large columns – hundreds of times, similarly marveling over the breathtaking view of the city bowl. Rhodes’ pensive posture – reminiscent of Rodin’s *The Thinker* – brooding over the city of Cape Town is symbolic of his grand aspirations of empire. The location, positioning, and posture of the Rhodes statue conveys, as Gwasira argues, several “hidden meanings.”²⁹ The “British-

²⁹ Gwasira, “Monuments as Metaphors.”

Imperialist visual legacy”³⁰ described by Bates is much more readily discernable, however. The following text is engraved in both English and Afrikaans on the statue’s granite plinth:

I dream my dream, by rock and heath and pine,
Of Empire to the northward. Ay, one land
From Lion’s Head to Line!

Excerpted from Runyard Kipling’s poem, *The Song of the Cities* (1922), the lines unmistakably reference Rhodes. Aside from the fact that the two were well-known friends, the outlook from Lion’s Head peak, located between Cape Town’s Table Mountain and Signal Hill, was well-known as one of Rhodes’ favorite views in Cape Town. The “Line” refers to Rhodes’ lifelong dream of creating a railway from the Cape Colony to Cairo, bringing with it an uninterrupted corridor of British colonial rule.



Figure 2.5 Rhodes statue tagged with graffiti during an earlier protest in 2008

³⁰ Bates, “No Longer Watching Over Heath and Man.”

“The interesting question is whether the statue is still meaningful more than sixty years after the Rhodes memorial committee presented it to the University?”

The emotional intensity that has come to characterize the Rhodes Must Fall movement answers Gwasira’s question with a resounding “YES!” Published nearly a decade and a half ago, the author could not have anticipated the uprisings that began last March. Yet those who opposed removing Rhodes from upper campus echoed her arguments that the statue has assumed new meanings over time – meanings that are reflective of “differing attitudes towards colonialism” (90). Recognizing the egregious ills brought about by colonialism, a substantial opposition rallied around the position of the statue’s removal constituting historical erasure. In an Op-ed written for the Guardian amid ongoing protests, Siya Mnyada stated “... As a black UCT alumnus who walked past that statue for four years, I think Rhodes should be left exactly where he is. Removing him omits an essential part of the institution’s history that has contributed to everything good, bad and ugly about it – and arguably the country too.”³¹

Pointing to the numerous volumes located in the University’s library pertaining to Rhodes – many of which, as I argued in the previous chapter, are uncritical in their portrayals – as well as the many streets, buildings, memorials, and even a university, named after him, students also argued that a literal or physical removal of the statue should not, and in fact *could* not, be commensurate with an ideological removal or historical erasure:

Ntsika: If I could disassociate myself with the history and the legacy of Rhodes as far as possible, I would gladly do that. But again, he has such an important mark in the history of South Africa. He was a very influential figure, he still is. His memory, it lingers. This one statue is one of dozens of other statues of him that are around. There’s the University in the country that’s named after him. Being associated with the Mandela-Rhodes Foundation – having anyone be associated with Mandela makes them seem like a big, influential figure. But to me, I can only ever remember him as a racist tyrant. Whenever

³¹ Mnyada, Siya, “‘Cecil Rhodes’ Colonial Legacy Must Fall – Not His Statue,” *The Guardian*, March 25, 2015, accessed October 7, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/25/south-africa-rhodesmustfall-statue>

anything to defend him or defend his legacy is said to me, the one thing that will always be lingering in my mind is that this man had a clear intention to subdue and oppress Black people and would probably try to do the same thing if he was still alive.

The material consequences of Rhodes' legacy – which I also explained in the previous chapter – and the legacy of colonialism in general do not permit it.

The Conditions of Perception

Gwasira also argues that “[t]he [Rhodes statue] can be consumed by all and is thus open to different interpretations” (2001, 89). One’s visual consumption of the statue is unquestionably open to different interpretations, hence the contestation and lack of consensus among students even within the movement. This is an obvious, rather uninteresting fact that does little to uncover the motivations behind said interpretations, however. I would like to problematize this sweeping “all” statement with a question of my own: is the statue consumed in the *same way* by all? What I have uncovered through my interviews suggests that such is not the case. One’s interpretations of the statue’s significance are greatly informed by personal experience – more specifically identification with, or membership in, a social group that has its own history as well as a very specific relationship to the history represented by the statue.

James Clacherty

Originally from Johannesburg, South Africa, James Clacherty is a student of anthropology and environmental and geographical sciences at the University of Cape Town. We met while I was studying abroad at UCT, often commiserating over the puzzling (but always enlightening) readings for our Anthropology of Power and Wealth lectures and tutorials. James identifies as a white South African of British descent. The following excerpt from our interview is one example of how identity colors perspective.

Chrislyn: So what did that statue symbolize to you? Or how do you feel that it symbolized something to other students, if anything?

James: So, I've got to...umm...So I'm, I'm, uhhh...So my heritage is... I'm a British settler South African. My ancestors were British...Welsh and Irish...settlers that...ended up in South Africa. So, umm... there's...To a large degree, Rhodes is very much part of my cultural heritage, if you could call it that. Umm...my family's journey to South Africa is probably similar to his, although he came here for a very particular reason. We're part of the same community in that sense... like a historical community.

But at the same time, there's an added element – which is a bit of an aside – but umm...if you think of my Irish and Welsh heritage, they didn't like the English very much at all, and Cecil John Rhodes very much represents Englishness as opposed to Irishness or Welshness. And also, my family – I'm certainly not working class at the moment...that's my positioning – but back in history, my family is very much working class. Long ago, one of my ancestors apparently led a land rebellion in Ireland or something like that. The kind of thing that Rhodes represents I'm both very much in line with, but also to some degree opposed to, just in terms of my heritage.

Personally, I can't say I paid much attention to the statue that much at all until I went to a debate that the UCT Debating Society held a few months before the whole Rhodes Must Fall movement really began. I found myself in that debate kind of hopping between the two sides – the speakers were all very good and very convincing, so I kind of was backwards and forwards – but by the end of it, kind of deciding: “Yeah, Rhodes was a dick. This wasn't a cool guy, and this is not someone we should be valorizing in this way. Are we talking about the statue in particular, not just Rhodes?”

Chrislyn: We can talk about both. We can talk about the statue itself and Rhodes as historical figure.

James: The statue was a very neutral, benign, almost invisible thing in my life until I got conscientized to the real significance of it. More than that, I really like Rudyard Kipling. And [Rhodes] and Rudyard Kipling were friends. I've read some of Rudyard Kipling's books. Having a settler identity myself, and having a colonial heritage, is kind of this strange then-nostalgia, but now an uncomfortable-nostalgia about coloniality. That's what Rudyard Kipling writes about. There's this weird, warm, fuzzy feeling to it. Rhodes is part of that same narrative. On the statue – the reason I brought up Rudyard Kipling, because I don't know if you knew this – on the statue's plinth there's a Rudyard Kipling quote on it. So that's where he comes in.

Chrislyn: Do you recall what it is?

James: Ummm...No, I don't. It shouldn't be too difficult to find.

Chrislyn: It's okay. I imagine that I could just Google it or something.

James: If you look at a photograph of the statue as well, you'll probably be able to make it out. I think it's one of his poems, but I'm not entirely sure. Something about looking

out over the land and conquering lands or something kind of colonial like that. For a long time it was kind of like a non-entity, really. I didn't really think about it. I couldn't say that the presence of the statue was particularly violent to me, so even after I recognized the problematic-ness of it, it was a very detached kind of feeling. I was aware of the problematic nature of the statue and why it should be taken down. Any emotion I had invested in that sentiment was a frustration at the injustice of it. But it wasn't a sense of actual personal trauma, violence, or anything like that. But I would say that is because of my positionality. I'm very much white and very male and very colonial.

Among the many themes that can be teased from James' deeply reflexive response is how one's identity influences their perception of the Rhodes statue. James describes himself as a member of Rhodes' "historical community", further complicating the thoroughness of this membership by highlighting his Irish and Welsh ancestry. Nevertheless, his "settler identity" has protected him from the institutional racism that continues to marginalize Black and Coloured. Even though James rationally understood why the statue is problematic – in that it "valorizes" a problematic colonial figure – and was frustrated by the injustice of its continued presence at the University, he admitted to feeling detached from the negativity that the statue represents. He was not personally traumatized by it. James further explains his detachment as a condition of his *positionality* as a white, male South African, revealing his training as a student of anthropology in the process.

The ellipses used in this reproduction of James and I's conversation do not denote the omission of words, but rather an attempt to textually represent the awkward pauses and self-interjections that arose as he tried to explain his relationship to the statue. Such can easily be explained away as a characteristic of naturally occurring speech; however, I was also of the impression that these interruptions were indicative of an attempt to reconcile himself with the "uncomfortable nostalgia of coloniality". Accepting the privilege that inherently accompanies whiteness is a difficult, guilt-laden process, as James so aptly explained later in our conversation:

James: The response of lots of white people was incredibly defensive and often actively aggressive and...violent...and....pretty horrible actually... There's a lot of opposition from white people. It's quite disgusting. I don't know if you've seen any of that stuff –

Chrislyn: Yeah. I've seen some of the posts that my friends have been sharing. It's been interesting. It's a similar thing that's happening [in the United States]... There are a lot of white students who don't like to encounter their complicity sometimes in upholding [oppressive] structures. When they're forced to reconcile themselves with that, it's just outright denial, like: "well this has nothing to do with me."

James: From [a] personal perspective, I can really understand that. It's really uncomfortable being told that you – So the analogy which I think is great, which makes it make a lot of sense to me is that if you understand privilege as a gun, then the person on the firing end of the gun – it's a really terrible position to be in. It's not a nice place to be at all. There are significant disadvantages to the person on the handle side of the gun. But at the same time the person on the handle side of the gun is still holding the gun. And holding the gun is also not a nice position to be in. I mean it's better than being at the pointy end of the gun, but it's still...you get what I'm saying.

Chrislyn: Yeah.

James: It's similar to something that Paul Gilroy talks about. He says as much as white people enslaved black people and black people became slaves, white people were made slave masters. And being a slave master – as much as it isn't as bad as being a slave, certainly – it's still not a nice place to be. It's not something you want to be, necessarily. Even if you are sympathetic to progressive politics and follow racial issues and stuff like that, there's still the whole issue of recognizing your privilege. It is an uncomfortable position. You just have to somehow be able to work through that discomfort and kind of embrace it and say: "This comfort is good discomfort. I should be feeling this."

I found the statement about the making of slaves and slave masters in Paul Gilroy's foundational book, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). The comment was actually made by African American author, Toni Morrison, during an interview conducted by Gilroy. Aptly titled, "Living Memory: Meeting Toni Morrison," the interview was used in *The Black Atlantic* as well as another of his books, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures*, published in the same year.

Slavery broke the world in half, it broke it in every way. It broke Europe. It made them into something else, it made them slave masters, it made them crazy. You can't do that for hundreds of years and it not take a toll. They had to dehumanize, not just the slaves

but themselves. They had to reconstruct everything in order to make that system appear true. (Gilroy 1993, 221)

The analogy of the gun and James' reference to Gilroy (Morrison) illustrates a position similar to one made by Frantz Fanon in the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* (2007). While many anti-colonialists have (rightfully) focused on the experiences of the colonized, studying up furnishes an opportunity to better understand how the colonizer – or his descendants – can *look* at the same object, but *see* very different things. Though the conditions of the colonist and the colonized are by no means equitable, as my informant emphasized several times, Gilroy, Morrison, and Fanon argue that colonialism was dehumanizing for *both* the colonized and the colonizer. It is harder, however, for the colonist to free himself of his ideologies, Fanon claims. The entirety of their existence is predicated on the irrefutable “fact” of their superiority as well as the nobleness of their “civilizing” mission.

Ntsika Maki

By contrast, many students of color described feeling personally disturbed by the presence of the statue and the legacy that it represented. Ntsika Maki is also a student at the University of Cape Town. Hailing from King William's Town in the province of the Eastern Cape, Ntsika identifies as Black South African. He did not disclose his ethnic identity – most likely because I did not ask – an interesting fact to which I will return in Chapter 6. “As a young Black person,” Ntsika explained in our interview, “I think [the Rhodes statue] commemorated a violence and oppression against my kind. It was a symbol of an oppressive legacy...It always symbolized – when someone would draw attention to it – it always symbolized oppression and violence against Black history for me personally.”

Rhodes Must Fall sought to make these experiences, the reality of psychological trauma carried over from centuries of colonialism and racism – the center of its movement. The following excerpt was taken from the mission statement posted on the Rhodes Must Fall Facebook page:

At the root of this struggle is the dehumanisation of black people at UCT. This dehumanisation is a violence exacted only against black people by a system that privileges whiteness...It is therefore crucial that this movement flows from the black voices and black pain that have been continuously ignored and silenced.³²

Referring, to the earlier points regarding the dehumanizing effects of colonialism for all parties involved, I have to disagree with part of this statement. There is no questioning, however, the privileging of whiteness at UCT and in the Academy as an institution, be it in South Africa or elsewhere.

More Than a Statue: The Violence of White Privilege in the Academy

James: From what I've been told, other students felt that the presence of the statue was a violent presence. And it represented violence in the institution as a whole. The statue wasn't necessarily *the* thing; it was a violent image that represented more violence. I'm now starting to understand that sense of trauma or the violent nature of the institution more because I've started engaging with it more and have actually come into conflict with various departments in certain instances. It's much more personal. I can get an idea of it more. I still can't say that I have experienced that [kind of oppression], but I think I understand it a little better because of my increased interactions with the institution.

From its inception, it was clear that the Rhodes Must Fall movement was about much more than the statue. As James explained, the statue was a violent image that represented more violence. The cycle of dispossession and poverty facilitated by Rhodes and other imperialists is one example of the violence embodied within the Rhodes statue. The statue also symbolized a system of violence inherent to the structure of the University itself, namely the many ways in

³² "UCT Rhodes Must Fall Mission Statement."

which whiteness has been deemed more valuable. The privileging of white identities can be observed (in part) by examining the racial composition of university administration and faculty. In 2014, a mere 14% of South African university professors identified as Black³³. At the University of Cape Town, this figure is even more dismal. Xolela Mangcu, associate professor of sociology at UCT, posed the following question during an interview with *The Guardian*: “How can you teach history, political studies, anthropology, arts, without a single black full professor in those departments? It is simply unconscionable in this day and age that the University of Cape Town would not have a single black South African woman who is a full professor.”³⁴ One of the demands issued by Rhodes Must Fall protesters was that the university commit to hiring more faculty of color.

Students argued that the process of diversification would not be enough, however. The exclusion of the many intellectual contributions made by Black African scholars also constitutes an act of violence, contributing to the stereotypical portrayal of Africa as a land without history or culture. In order to bring real transformation to UCT and South African society at large, the university curriculum would have to be decolonized (read: made less Eurocentric). James argued that the existing system of evaluation would also have to be reconsidered:

Chrislyn: The institution did respond by removing the statue, but it’s obviously more nuanced than that. How would you describe the institutional response?

James: I think the removal of the statue was almost like a containment rather than a...I think it’s probably fair. This isn’t a particularly straight answer to the question, but I feel like the institution – although it did remove the statue – is still kind of culpable to some degree because the statue remained for so long. I recognize the nature of these things is often that people don’t realize that something is a problem until enough people tell them that they’re a problem. I’m going through a very similar experience now where we’re

³³ “Why Are There So Few Black Professors in South Africa?” *The Guardian*, October 6, 2014, accessed, February 7, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/06/south-africa-race-black-professors>.

³⁴ Ibid.

trying to get the exams re-weighted because exams are worth 50% of our year mark. That's really silly. Exams aren't a good educational tool. I won't go into that story, but it's really silly. We really don't like it, and it's a very stressful situation to be in. Please change it. And the institution is like: 'Hmmm... No.' But then the irony is that they taught us all the skills and the knowledge we have so we can tell them why it's problematic. We learned from them. This isn't stuff they don't know. But now we're actually telling them: 'This is a terrible idea.' And they're kinda like: 'Oh, yeah! We never thought about that.'

Chrislyn: I remember writing exams at UCT last year and just being terrified –

James: It's not pleasant at all, is it?

Chrislyn: No.

James: That style of assessment is very much in line with the things that the Rhodes Must Fall movement were opposing and fighting against. The exams themselves are a technician, bureaucratic tool. That's quite a bit of jargon, but that's a very accurate way of describing them. And they require students to bracket all their emotions – all their trauma, anxieties, their everyday struggles and stuff like that – put them aside, and they expect you to write these lucid, concise, well-articulated pieces on whatever it is we've been learning – which the content of the stuff for some people is a violence in itself. One of the most pertinent examples, I think, is in the music college. I think they call [the class] worlds of music. They're still reading books where Black people are referred to in all sorts of derogatory ways. Of course you're supposed to read it in this objective, distanced way. But how are you supposed to do that, if that is your reality? The people who are being described are your literal ancestors – from only three or four generations ago. And now you expect them to write an exam under very stressful conditions and talk about these things.

The statue itself may very well be a “neutral, benign” thing, as James described – a hunk of oxidized metal whose anatomical resemblance to Mr. Cecil John Rhodes, the man, remains questionable at best. Other encounters have not been so innocuous. From the silencing of Africanist perspectives in the classroom to assigning course materials that continue to marginalize non-white identities, for many students of color, the Rhodes statue – and the entirety of their educational experience – has been a source of trauma. Academic institutions should be safe spaces where students are equally supported in their educational pursuits. In that respect, the demand for the statue's removal is perfectly legitimate.

Returning to the example of the removal of statues honoring communist leaders in Eastern Europe, I would also like to point out the double standard present in when and where arguments of historical erasure are made. Removing statues of Stalin in the Ukraine and tearing down the Berlin Wall, for example, did not erase the history of Soviet expansionism, but rather symbolized the falling of the old regime as well as the successful transition into democracy. Due to the Cold War and the pervasiveness of Western anticommunist ideology, the destruction of these symbols has been met with unwavering support and further heralded as a sign of progress. That this is absolutely not the case when the dominant ideology is being questioned reveals the continued support for the principles of racial exclusion despite colonialism and apartheid having ended. At the very least, it implies a fear of what a society free of the constructs that have privileged certain identities at the expense of others would look like:

At whatever level we study it – relationships between individuals, new names for sports clubs, the human admixture at cocktail parties, in the police, on the directing boards of national or private banks – decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain "species" of men by another "species" of men...To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up. The extraordinary importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded. The need for this change exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and in the lives of the men and women who are colonized. But the possibility of this change is equally experienced in the form of a terrifying future in the consciousness of another "species" of men and women: the colonizers. (Fanon 2007, 34-35)

Tearing down statues and renaming streets and buildings are practices common of regime changes. While the ANC did gain political control in 1994, they did so with the condition that they would not seek retribution – economic or otherwise – for the many crimes committed against Black and Coloured South Africans under the apartheid regime.³⁵ Legislation changed, but vestiges of the old order remained unquestioned, all in the name of maintaining the rainbow

³⁵ Eve Fairbanks, "Why South African Students Have Turned On Their Parents' Generation," November 18, 2015, accessed December 17, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/nov/18/why-south-african-students-have-turned-on-their-parents-generation>

of peace. These vestiges are finally being questioned, perhaps for the first time since the transition into democracy. Monuments like the Rhodes statue are reminders of the former glory of the colonial past. Though, at present, they may not constitute much more than vessels of an “uncomfortable nostalgia,” disrupting their existence mirrors a similar disruption of the whole social structure. As Fanon argues, a change of that magnitude generates a tremendous fear among those whose previous stronghold may not be guaranteed in the reimagined post-colony. Beginning with a more detailed analysis of the movement’s major events, part two of this thesis will explore how the Rhodes Must Fall protests have tapped into the past not only as a means of making claims about the present, but as a vehicle for reimagining the future of South Africa.

Part Two: Reclaiming Memory

Chapter 3 The Revolution Will be Retweeted: Mobilizing and Memorializing the Movement Through Social Media

“The most important thing is that [social media] aided in mobilization and information-spreading...I could go onto Twitter and I knew exactly where everyone was, what people needed to be doing, what was needed where, and who needed to be where. You were always informed.”
 – James Clacherty

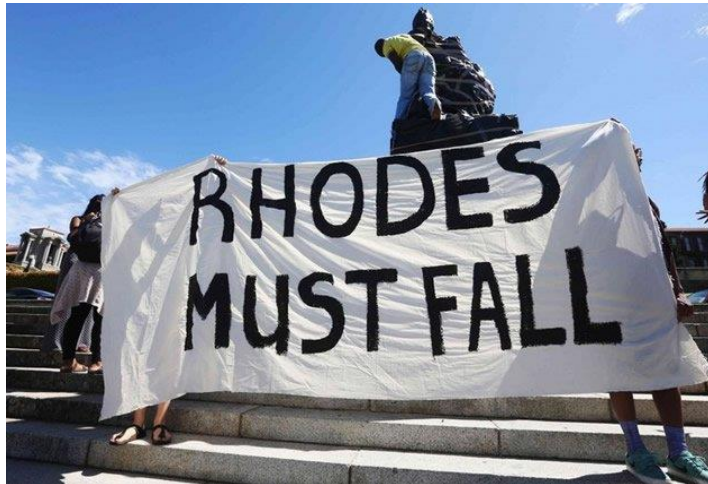


Figure 3.1 Students hold up a Rhodes Must Fall banner in front of the statue. The statue has been wrapped in black garbage bags.



Figure 3.2 Maxwele beside the statue during his demonstration on March 9th.

Launched at the University of Cape Town in March 2015, the Rhodes Must Fall movement is a student-led initiative advocating for the removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes from the University’s upper campus. What would become the first of a series of ongoing protests was precipitated by the actions of fourth year law student, Chumani Maxwele. On March 9th, Maxwele captured the attention of thousands of UCT students, faculty, and staff by throwing human excrement on the Rhodes statue. This iconic statement was at

once a denouncement of the persisting veneration of a past colonial figure as well as a decial of the continuing socioeconomic inequality, entrenched in a present day “prism of apartheid city planning and racialized identities” (Shepherd 240), that continues to subject

people of color to a substandard of living in Cape Town. On the morning of his demonstration, Maxwele took a minibus out to the township of Kayelitsha.³⁶ There he “picked up one of the buckets of shit that sat reeking on the kerbside” and brought it back to UCT. “Where are *our* heroes and ancestors?” he shouted before hurling the bucket’s contents into Rhodes’ bronze face.³⁷



Figure 3.3 Students gather for a display of extreme sports sponsored by Mountain Dew on Jammie Thursday the week before the open air dialogue



Figure 3.4 Jameson Plaza during the Open Air Dialogue

On March 12th, three days after the now infamous poo-flinging incident, over a thousand students converged on Jameson Plaza for an open-air dialogue. Typically serving as a space for advertising and entertainment,

“Jammie Thursdays” were reclaimed for the purpose of debating the significance of the statue’s continued presence at the University. Attitudes towards the statue, which I will describe in greater detail later in this essay, ranged from indifference and apathy to extreme disgust. Some were of the opinion that the statue rightfully honored Rhodes’ many

³⁶ As it was illegal for non-whites to live in the city of Cape Town proper, Kayelitsha was created by the apartheid government in 1985 to relieve overcrowding in the neighboring townships of Langa, Nyanga, and Gugulethu. The latter settlements served as the final destination for the tens of thousands non-whites who were forcibly removed from areas like the infamous District Six. These townships still exist and their present day residents are overwhelmingly Black, with a small percentage of Coloured South Africans.

³⁷ Fairbanks, “Turned on Their Parents’ Generation.”

contributions to the University and to education as a whole, as evidenced by the scholarship scheme established by his trust. Others argued that the good that has come out of Rhodes' legacy in death in no way outweighed the damage that he caused while he was alive. For many, the statue represented the glorification of an openly racist colonial figure. By the end of the meeting, students were calling for the statue to be removed. And so, Rhodes Must Fall was born.

Rhodes Must Fall – A Timeline:

- March 9, 2015: Chumani Maxwele throws human excrement on the Cecil Rhodes statue
- March 12, 2015: Open air dialogue at Jammie Plaza
- March 20, 2015: Student occupation of Bremner begins
- March 27, 2015: UCT Senate votes in favor of the statue being moved, pending approval from Heritage Western Cape
- April 8, 2015: UCT Council hosts special meeting to deliberate its final decision regarding the Rhodes statue
- April 9, 2015: The statue is removed from upper campus



In the ensuing weeks, students staged marches and sit-ins punctuated by drumming and the singing of anti-apartheid songs. The statue was repeatedly tagged with graffiti. On March 20th, a group of approximately 70 students stormed the Bremner

Figure 3.5 Sleeping students in occupied Bremner

building, interrupting Vice Chancellor Max Price's speech addressing other University administrators about the Rhodes statue. Refusing to leave until a precipitous date was set for the statue's removal, they began their occupation of the University's administrative headquarters which would indeed last until the statue was removed. A week later, UCT's Senate voted in favor of moving the statue. More direct action would have to await approval from the Western Cape's Heritage Council. In the meantime, however, the statue was boarded up so as to prevent further damage from protesters.

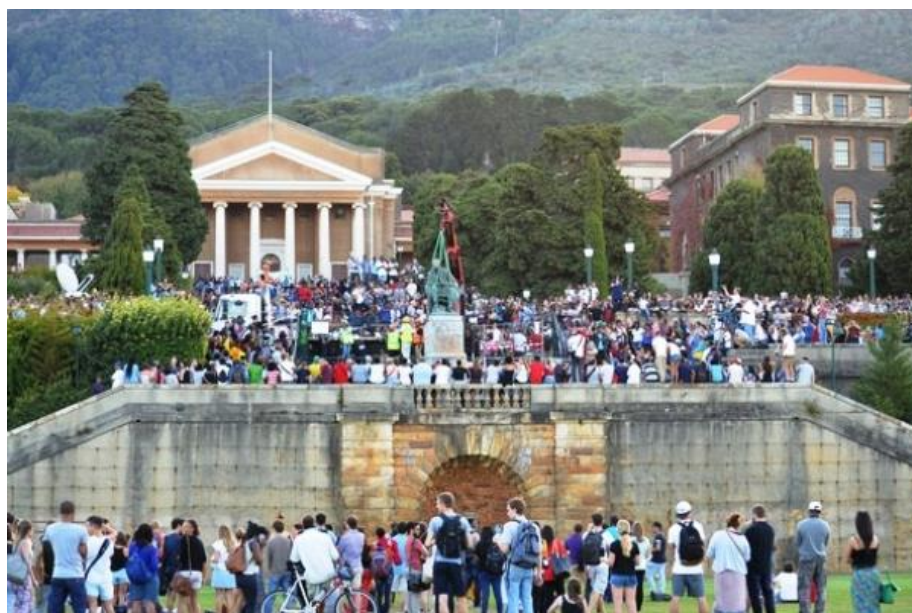


Figure 3.6 Students gather on the rugby fields and on Jameson plaza to witness the removal of the Rhodes statue on April 9th

Throughout this process, the RMF collective launched a sizeable social media campaign, under the hashtag, #RhodesMustFall. Their social media presence prompted solidarity movements

correspondingly calling for the removal of monuments commemorating racist colonial figures presently presiding over the University of Oxford, Rhodes' alma mater, in the United Kingdom. Protests erupted at neighboring universities on the Cape provinces – namely the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and Rhodes University in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape – and also found footing at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the University of Johannesburg (UJ) as far north as Gauteng. On April 8th, a council of UCT administrators, professors, students, and

community members unaffiliated with the University convened to make their final decision on the statue's fate. It was removed from UCT's upper campus on April 9th exactly one month after the movement officially began.

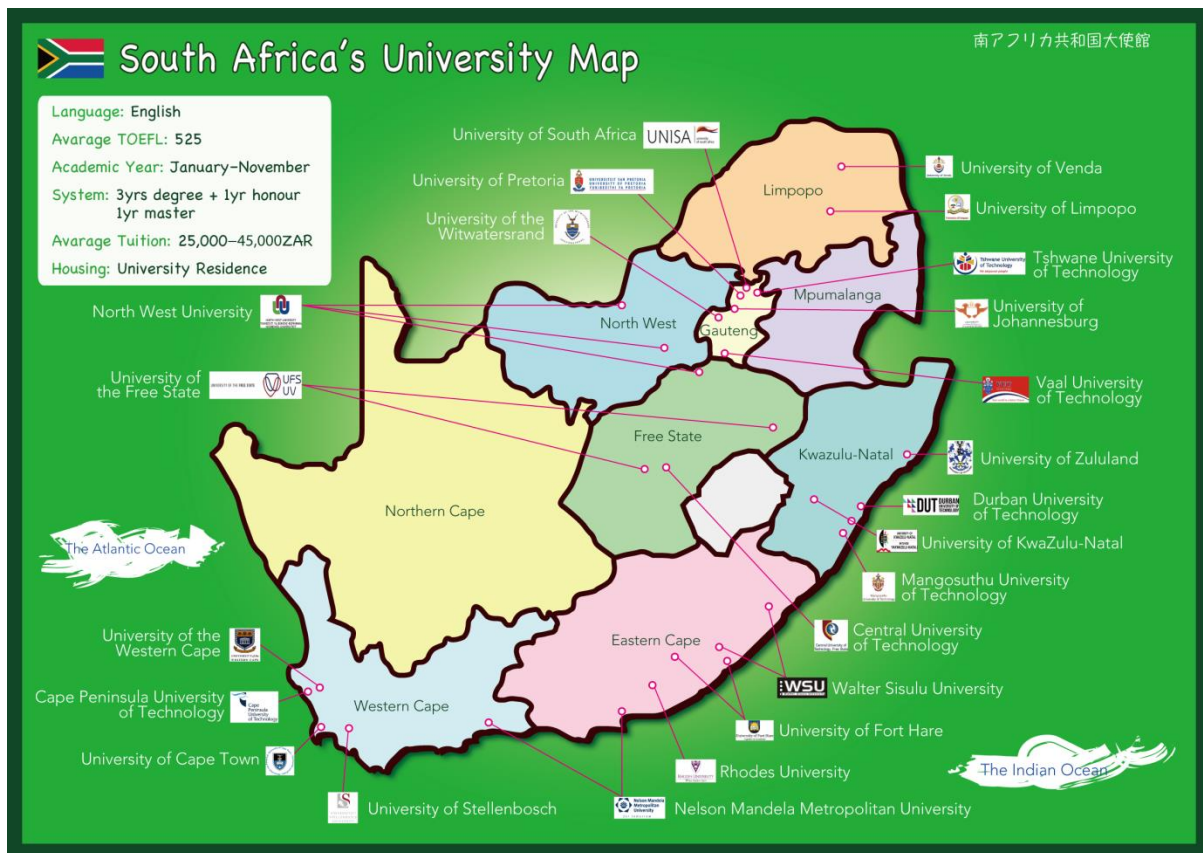


Figure 3.7 Map of South Africa's colleges and universities

End Outsourcing

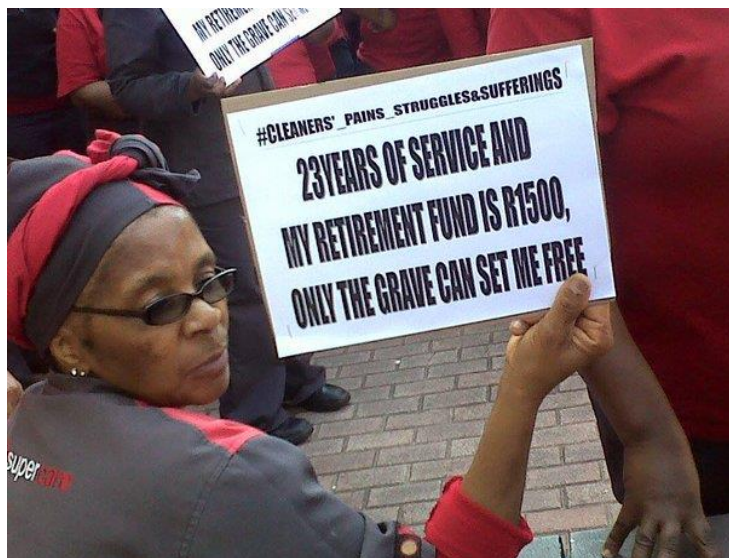


Figure 3.8 #EndOutsourcing protests at the University of Johannesburg

It did not end there, however.

Demonstrations continued even after Rhodes “fell”, with campus workers putting forth concerns of their own.

Subcontracted through external agencies like Metro Cleaning Services and British-owned G4S, UCT’s

auxiliary staff – all of whom are Black – of janitors, cooks, shuttle drivers,

and security guards were not receiving benefits that other University employees – an

overwhelmingly white professoriate and administration – were entitled to. In an interview with

The Daily Vox, Lindelana Tyhilana, a G4S security guard from the township of Philippi, said the following of his experience as an outsourced worker at UCT:

Lindelana: We cannot feed our families with the money we get from outsourcing. Sometimes, it’s even difficult to take our children to doctors when they are sick, because the money is not enough. We need to end the outsourcing, because a lot of the money is not coming to us as workers, it’s just going to the companies, not us. At the end of the day, we as the security workers, we are the ones who are suffering on the road. Sometimes the workers are getting sick, because when it’s winter you’re forced to stand outside. At the end of the month, we go home with R5,000. I’m fighting for my children to go to university, it is why we want insourcing. I, as a parent, didn’t have that opportunity, but if I get the chance to be insourced, that would be a big opportunity for my child.³⁸

³⁸ Ra’eesa Pather, “#EndOutsourcing: ‘I’m Working in a University, But I Can’t Even Afford to Enroll My Child There,’” *The Daily Vox*, September 2015, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/endoutsourcing-im-working-in-a-university-but-i-cant-even-afford-to-enrol-my-child-there/>.

A new hashtag, #EndOutsourcing, grew out of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, with students supporting workers in their demands for better pay and benefits. On October 28, 2015, after weeks of protest, UCT announced that it would commit to insourcing.

Fees Must Fall

Two other hashtags, #FeesMustFall and #NationalShutDown, surfaced concomitant with #EndOutSourcing. This wave of activism was prompted by the announcement of fee increases at universities across South Africa on October 12th. Protests began in Johannesburg over a 10.5% hike in university fees at Wits, with unrest reverberating throughout the country soon after. At UCT, students were opposing an 11% increase. A similar announcement had also been made at Rhodes University, with the additional stipulation that half of the amount be paid no later than January – just two months later. At least ten campuses were shut down as a result of the protests. Lectures were canceled, faculty and staff were advised to remain at home, and final examinations were postponed.



Figure 3.9 Security forces attempt to stem the oncoming tide of protesters at Parliament in Cape Town on October 21st

The university protests soon spread to ANC headquarters in Johannesburg as well as federal buildings in Pretoria (South Africa's administrative capital) and Cape Town (the country's legislative seat). Hoping to delay the midterm budget speech, on October 21st, students from UWC, Stellenbosch University, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, and other institutions joined UCT's RMF protesters in a march on parliament that drew a crowd of over 5,000. They demanded to be addressed by Minister of Education, Blade Nzimande, but were met by riot police instead. Ntsika Maki, a student at UCT, describes the confusion and the violent skirmishes with security forces that resulted in his own arrest and that of nearly two dozen others:

Ntsika: I think the reaction that was sustained was really surprising: the reaction of seeing the police attacking protesters like that was just... I don't think anyone really expected it to go that far... I remember being there in the front and being one of the people who were trying to push the gate open – stepping back – like we were trying to size each other up and see how we were gonna react. They were scared. We were scared.

But eventually the atmosphere – and a lot of people in the back – decided, 'let's just do it! This is parliament. This is for the people. Why should we be barred or barricaded from entering what is rightfully ours?' So we did eventually enter. Those few policemen or security guards couldn't handle the pressure of about 400, 500 people. There were, like, six of them. So we ended up making our way all the way to the front gates of the main chamber, which is the National Assembly chamber. For a while, people weren't sure what to do. Well now that we're here, should we just wait? Shall someone knock on the door? Literally, people were like, 'should we go up and knock, or bang it down, or open it?'

We tried to calm each other down. People started singing and protesting as normal protests usually go. And then all of sudden beside me, I started seeing this swarm of black men – dressed in black, dressed in the armory of the police force – running towards us, running in front of us, running around. Everyone is like, 'whoa! What is going on?' And then we got scared. Some people were trying to run away. But at the same time, like, 'well, we're so many of us. Why should we run? We're not really doing anything, we're peaceful.'

Eventually some of the leaders in the front decided a good idea would be just to sit down and to continue our singing and our protest peacefully. People were trying to sit down, calm each other down. You can imagine that people were hyping up. People were singing, people were chanting 'let's just go in and open the door! – people who ha[d] their own ideas of how the protest should go. So eventually you have two sides – some of them sitting down like I was. I'm one of the people pulling people down beside me like

‘let’s just sit down and just see what is going to happen.’ They were like, ‘no! Let’s just move forward!’”

And then the police – the riot squad which was called on – decided to push forward. And I think that’s when a lot of confusion and a lot of violence started to erupt. People were like ‘whoa, we’re just essentially...we’re having a fight between ourselves. We’re not even trying to attack you. Why are you attacking us?’ The police and the riot squad started pushing people away with the shields and a stun grenade exploded. Then that kind of [sets] the whole thing [off]. People ran towards the exit, people ran around. People started running all over the place. Finally, the other gate at the back – the one that we couldn’t get into at first – was opened, I don’t know, by some force. Someone opened it. Then we saw *another* large crowd of people running in towards us and joining us. So they closed us in for a while. I was part of the front group. There was a space between another barricade of riot police and then another group of people there.

It wasn’t the end. We decided we’re not going to run. We’re not being violent. We’re not attacking anyone. All we really want is to be heard. We just want the minister of higher education to come out and address the students and assure them that there won’t be a fees increase. As soon as that’s done – I’m sure there will be other conversations – but the majority of people will probably be satisfied and will want to leave. That didn’t happen. And then stun grenades just started exploding all over the place. It took about, I think, 30 minutes for the police to eventually push everyone out. It happened in phases. We’re pushing back, we stop, we sit down, a stun grenade explodes. You run back. A stun grenade explodes. You run back. And then eventually they pushed us out. Those were the events inside parliament. The rest happened outside parliament.

Violence was not limited to Cape Town. Protesters everywhere were met with riot police who deployed tactics such as batons, pepper spray, colored gas, rubber bullets, and the stun grenades Ntsika described above. The violent clashes prompted Winnie Mandela, ex-wife of the late President Nelson Mandela, to release the following statement on her Facebook page:



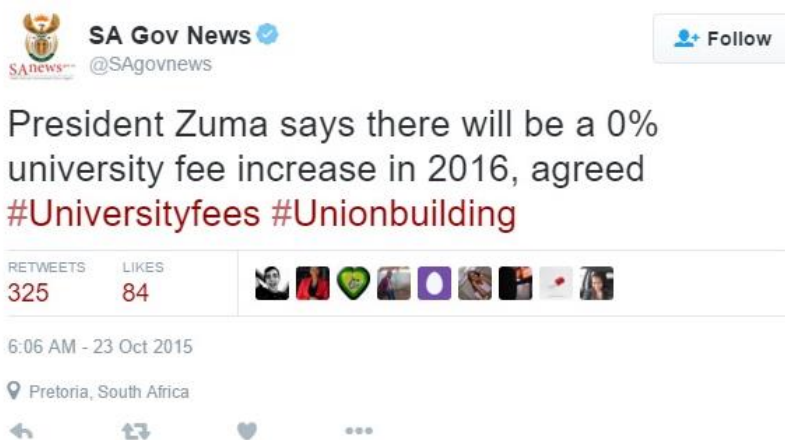
Figure 3.10 Facebook status posted by Winnie Mandela

#FeesMustFall facilitated an even greater mobilization of students, a feat unparalleled since the Soweto uprisings of 1976. After the apartheid regime fell in 1994, the Black Economic Empowerment program (BEE) was devised to ensure the employment of previously oppressed groups. It did not go into effect until 2003. It was heavily critiqued for failing to incorporate larger swaths of disadvantaged populations. Major detractors also accused the affirmative action policy of “reverse racism”. Similar to anti-affirmative action arguments here in the United States, many felt that the BEE encouraged businesses to make hiring decisions based on race at the expense of experience and other qualifications. In 2007, Freedom Party leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, stated “[t]he government's reckless implementation of the affirmative-action policy is forcing many white people to leave the country, creating a skills shortage crisis.”³⁹

How, then, were South Africans of color expected to surmount a diminished position imposed by centuries of racially motivated oppression? Better education. A greater emphasis was placed on the importance of tertiary education, feeding into the rhetoric of meritocracy and social mobility. Still, more than two decades after “liberation”, higher education remains little more than an “unattainable dream” for many. 60% of Black South African workers earn less than the R4, 125 (\$266.57 USD) per month need to remain above the poverty line.⁴⁰ Scholarships and other forms of financial aid is still not enough to finance a university education. The #FeesMustFall protests brought this reality to the fore. Students argued that the planned fee increases would only serve to further exclude people from financially disenfranchised families, which are overwhelmingly Black.

³⁹ “Buthelezi Slams Affirmative Action,” *The Mail and Guardian*, February 1, 2007, accessed, February 17, 2016, <http://mg.co.za/article/2007-02-01-buthelezi-slams-affirmative-action>

⁴⁰ Basani Baloyi and Gilad Isaacs, “South Africa’s ‘Fees Must Fall’ Protests Are About More Than Tuition Costs,” *CNN*, October 28, 2015, accessed January 8, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/27/africa/fees-must-fall-student-protest-south-africa-explainer/>



As students raged outside of the Union Building in Pretoria, President Jacob Zuma (of the ANC) announced that there would be no increase in university fees for the

Figure 3.11

following year. For the purposes of this project, I will primarily focus on the events surrounding the initial eruptions that culminated in #RhodesMustFall in March and April. With unrest persisting long after Rhodes’ “fall”, however, it became abundantly clear the initial movement was about much more than a statue. #EndOutsourcing and #FeesMustFall are extensions of the same larger moment and provide the additional context needed to understand the motivations behind the RMF movement.

Anthropology and the Digital World

Though digital technologies are typically conceptualized as the brainchildren of computer science and software engineering, anthropology has also had an impact on their development. For decades, tech companies have relied on anthropologists and their observational skills to better tailor their products to human users. Dr. Bonnie Nardi, for example, worked at Hewlett-Packard, AT&T, and Apple labs (among many others) prior to becoming a professor at UC Irvine. In an interview for a New York Times article cleverly titled, *Coming of Age in Paolo Alto*, Nardi described the confusion with which her presence was met in these settings: “Usually people say, ‘What is an anthropologist doing here?’” “The context is really critical,” Dr. Canavan

further explained in the same piece. “If we want to develop technologies that really fit into the way people live their day-to-day lives, then we have to understand how people really live.”

Now that these technologies have, in turn, come to define the ways in which people live and communicate, anthropology is increasingly devoting attention to how they affect social relationships. Tom Boellstorff’s book, *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human* (2009), does just what the title suggests, highlighting the many ways our virtual existences shape individual and group identity. What I find most fascinating about Boellstorff’s research, in large part due to its relevance to my own methodology, is the fact that it all took place online. Under the avatar, “Tom Bukowski”, he conducted “more than two years of fieldwork in Second Life, living among and observing its residents in exactly the same way anthropologists traditionally have done to learn about cultures and social groups in the so-called real world.”⁴¹

The virtual world is collapsing our sense of time and space such that one can physically be in one place while actively participating with other people and spaces thousands of miles away. Though the online community of Second Life is drastically different from the more traditional field sites Boellstorff frequented during his earlier research in Indonesia (2005) – or that of the South African University – the former raises important questions about established anthropological definitions of field and methodology in ways that speak to what could quite possibly constitute a major shift (or simply a more common occurrence) in research.

⁴¹ “Boellstorff, T.: *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*,” Princeton University Press, accessed January 19, 2016, <http://press.princeton.edu/quotes/q10611.html>

Methods

Through social media, I was able to maintain some of the relationships I had forged with students at the University of Cape Town long after I left South Africa at the end of 2014. Even before Rhodes Must Fall began there were retweets, Snapchats, well-wishes for my 21st birthday on my Facebook wall, FaceTime calls, Wype (wine + Skype) dates, and the occasional Instagram #TBT (Throwback Thursday) in commemoration of our time together. It was precisely because of these social networks that I became aware of the demonstrations at UCT before they made headlines here in the United States. My Facebook and Twitter newsfeeds were suddenly overrun by statuses and other posts relating to RMF, the number of comments underneath growing exponentially as the debate was carried over from the streets of Cape Town to online platforms.

In gathering data for this project, I first turned to the online archives of Twitter and Facebook. Through timestamped textual and photographic posts, I constructed a timeline of major events. Recognizing that Rhodes Must Fall was triggered and shaped by strong historical forces, however, I also turned my attention to the more “traditional,” academic archive so as to familiarize myself with the colonial history that Cecil Rhodes very much embodies. Narrative inquiry is also a central part of this project. Without direct access to the field site for participant observation, and with such intense debate over whether the statue should or should not have been removed, the personal experiences of those who witnessed and, more importantly, actively took part in the movement is key to understanding the motivations behind the positions taken. After describing the aim of my research and calling for participants in a Facebook status, I conducted two ethnographic interviews over Skype’s video calling software. I also had a number of informal conversations over Facebook’s instant messaging system. Navigating a seven hour time difference was beyond challenging. Though my decision to carry out this research online was

largely due to time and financial constraints, I also find it fitting. The remainder of this chapter will explore the phenomenon of online activism – also called social media activism, or clicktivism – and its effect on the Rhodes Must Fall movement.

Social Media Activism

#RhodesMustFall is only the latest in a series of movements that have used social media to advance their cause. Since the Arab Spring, numerous volumes have been published analyzing the role of social media in advancing the revolutions that toppled governments in Tunisia and Egypt as well as the uprisings that spread across Libya, Syria, and their neighboring countries (Bebawi and Bossio 2014; Carvin 2013; Gerbaudo 2012; Howard and Hussain 2013). A sustained online presence is requisite of any savvy social movement, and Rhodes Must Fall is no different. The RMF Facebook page has nearly 15,000 likes, and their Twitter account has a following of well over 6,000. They have a Wikipedia page as well as an official website of their own to which their Google e-mail address is linked. These platforms have served a variety of functions –namely facilitating organizational details and enabling the production of counter-narratives (and thus the democratization of knowledge production) – which will be explained in further detail below.

Communicating Information and Ideas

Part of the power of social media is its ability to instantly connect billions of people who may or may not have actually had face to face interactions. Maxwele's demonstration became universally known in part because of the centrality of the location where it took place (and thus a large number of witnesses) but also because of its shock factor. The Rhodes Must Fall movement was not, however, limited to that one moment. It consisted of a number of marches, sit-ins, and

other acts of protest (described above) that repeatedly called attention to their cause. Mobilizing a campus of well over 26,000 students – many of whom live off campus as I did when I studied at UCT – required the rapid dissemination of information to a large number of unacquainted people. This network expands significantly when we factor in the tens of thousands of students also protesting at other universities in Cape Town. Tweets and Facebook posts allowed for the instant communication of minutiae: the seemingly trivial and decidedly less glamorous details that gives a movement momentum. James Clacherty, an Anthropology and Environmental and Geographical Sciences (EGS) student at UCT, explained the importance of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook during our interview:

James: I suppose the most important thing is that [social media] aided in mobilization and information-spreading. In the #FeesMustFall [protests] it was really useful...I could go onto Twitter and I knew exactly where everyone was, what people needed to be doing, and what was needed where, and who needed to be where. And Facebook as well. At the end of the day people would share important content: documents that were signed, what needed to be done, what was done, and who said what...those kinds of things. You're always informed.

And there was plenty to be done, especially at UWC where a violent suppression of student activism left dozens marooned, and sometimes injured, on campus without access to food and other resources. The following status update from James' Facebook profile demonstrates the efficacy of social media in maintaining an ongoing network of assistance to neighboring universities. His question is promptly answered with detailed instructions on where to go and how to get there. He is also put into contact with two other individuals heading to UWC:

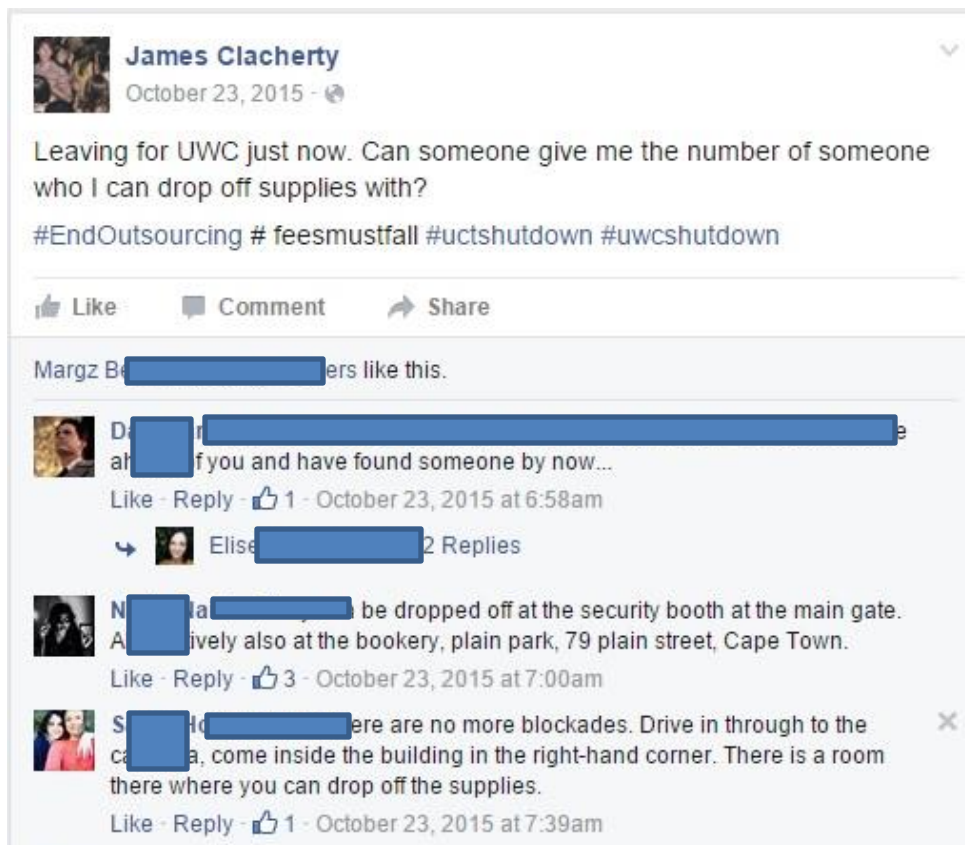


Figure 3.12

The following post was made by a physical therapy student at UCT’s medical school. They were among the volunteers for the Medics for Fees Must Fall (#Medics4FMF) team. As demonstrated by their Facebook status, there was also a great need for medical supplies following the violent clashes with riot police during the student protests at parliament. The audiences for these requests are not limited to the people who are part of their existing network of friends on Facebook or Twitter. Used to group similar content across mediums and platforms, anyone who follows #RhodesMustFall – or any of its subsequent reincarnations – has access to that information.

October 23, 2015 · 🌐

#Medics4FMF CALLING FOR DONATIONS OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES:
 CAPE TOWN DROP OFF POINT IS THE AZANIA HOUSE (5 Avenue Road, Mowbray)

THIS IS WHAT WE NEED:

Supplies:

1. Gauze wraps
2. Gauze pads/compression pads
3. Antiseptic solution/ wipes
4. Cotton balls/pads
5. Wound closure strips
6. Tape (paper or plastic, not electrical)
7. Examination gloves
8. Stick-on bandages (various size and type)
9. Bandages for strains and splinting.
10. Antibiotic ointment
11. Hydrocortisone cream
12. Bandage shears
13. Tweezers
14. Eye pads
15. Instant ice packs
16. Glucose tablets, honey packets, cake icing, or other emergency sugar supply, to treat diabetes-related hypoglycemia.
17. Rehydration mixture
18. Bum shield

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

7 people like this.

1 share

View 1 more comment

going to try use some of these vouchers to get stuff but they more might limit us to foodstuffs, any more suggestions apart from sugary goods? ❤️

Like · Reply · October 23, 2015 at 5:13am · Edited

Nvm, sorted, you guys are great! 🙏

Like · Reply · October 23, 2015 at 6:39am

I have put a bag of medical stuff through the gate at 32A. X

Like · Reply · October 23, 2015 at 7:33am

Thank you 🙏

Like · Reply · October 23, 2015 at 8:10am

Figure 3.13

Subverting Corporate Media

“Rhodes must fall!” was by no means a unanimous desire. A larger narrative emerged beyond the contending opinions on whether the statue should or should not be removed, however, characterizing protesters (and the movement itself) as violent, self-aggrandizing ne’er-do-wells. These attitudes, meant to undermine the legitimacy of the protester’s claims and actions, were echoed by students, faculty, and staff alike, finding footing in widely circulated new outlets. Rebecca Hodes is a medical historian with the AIDS and Society Research Unit at UCT’s Centre for Social Science Research. In an opinion piece for the *Daily Maverick* – a popular daily online South African newspaper (and subsidiary of *The Guardian*) – she wrote:

In sweeping aside the heroes of a certain past, those at the forefront of this movement, who claim authority through violence and vandalism, seek to establish themselves as heroes. But, in this, they have under-estimated the commitment of university members to reasoned and respectful debate – the primary values of the academy. The current leaders of Rhodes Must Fall will not attain the martyrdom they seek. Instead, they will expose themselves as the bullies they have become.⁴²

Hodes uses an interesting phrase – “heroes of a certain past” – to refer to Rhodes, which reminds us yet again of the dangers of historical revisionism. The language of “reasoned and respectful debate” used to describe the academy necessitates the oppositional construction of protesters as violent and lacking in reason. Not only are these critiques unproductive (in that they draw attention away from the conditions that have induced students to protest), they also play into stereotypes of the angry and irrational Black that has its roots in an even more sinister historical narrative. Meanwhile the violence Rhodes and other colonialists perpetrated in South Africa remain unexamined in favor of policing, both figuratively and literally, students’ frustrations. Rhodes Must Fall organizers have altogether rejected the notion that the validity of

⁴² Rebecca Hodes, “Op-Ed: How Rhodes Must Fall Squandered Public Opinion,” *The Daily Maverick*, August 20, 2015, accessed December 17, 2015, <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-08-20-op-ed-how-rhodes-must-fall-squandered-public-sympathy/#.Vx2CVTArlIU>.

their movement be contingent upon respectability politics by referring to the following excerpt from Steve Biko on their Facebook page's mission statement:

What I have tried to show is that in South Africa, political power has always rested with white society. Not only have the whites been guilty of being on the offensive but, by some skilful manoeuvres, they have managed to control the responses of the blacks to the provocation. Not only have they kicked the black but they have also told him how to react to the kick. For a long time the black has been listening with patience to the advice he has been receiving on how best to respond to the kick. With painful slowness he is now beginning to show signs that it is his right and duty to respond to the kick in the way he sees fit.⁴³

Still, students like the one below, were able to use their public platforms – in this case, her Facebook page – to challenge the narratives like the one put forth by Hodes and countless others and rewrite their own:

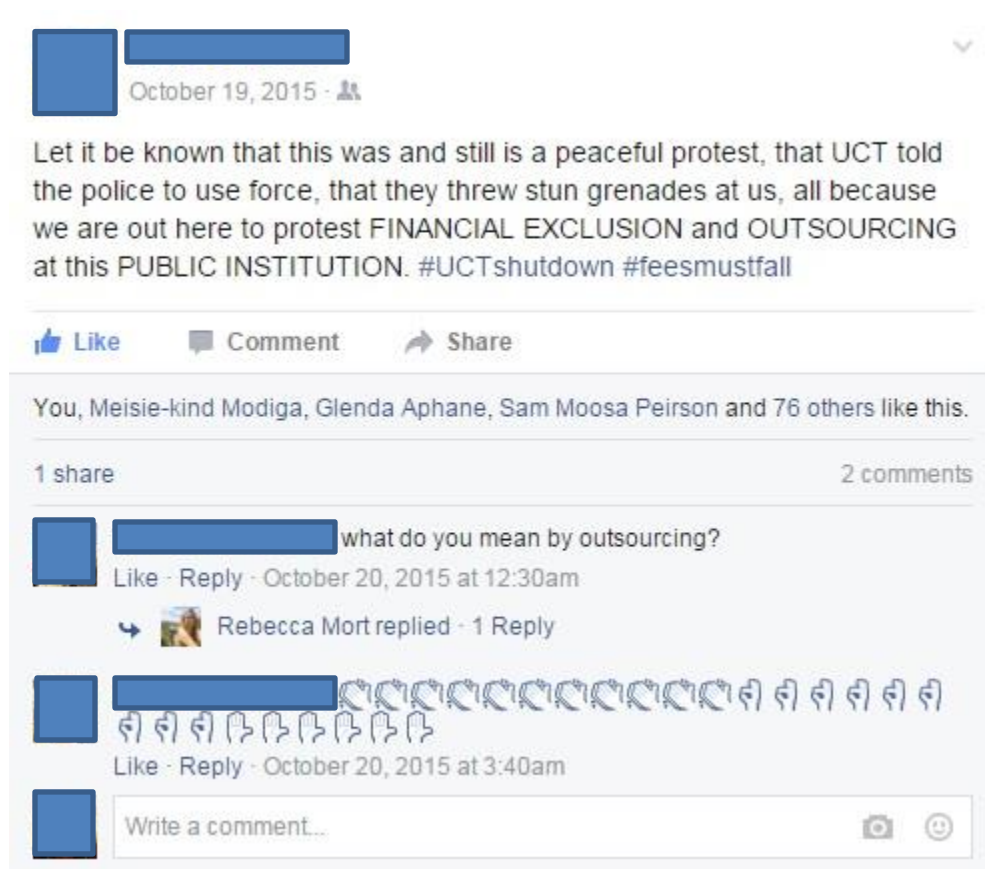


Figure 3.14

⁴³ “UCT Rhodes Must Fall Mission Statement”

This student took it upon themselves to correct some of the sensationalist headlines that appeared during the #FeesMustFall protests. They tweeted the results on their account with the caption, “Share the real story. Corrected media headlines”:



SHARE THE REAL STORY #FeesMustFall

Corrected media headlines.

3:29 AM - 22 Oct 2015



Figure 3.15

The titles read: “Police fire stun grenades at peaceful protesters to threaten and intimidate them”; “UCT protesters stop Maimane from co-opting their struggle”; and “Student protests threaten to fix a broken system”.

#WhatMediaWontShow also became a trending hashtag. Students posted pictures of themselves hosting study groups and cleaning buildings, road barricades, as well as other spaces they occupied during the protests.



Figure 3.16

It was not uncommon for the news published by students on social media to be featured in the more “official” reports released the following day. Some publications took it even further. In response to the backlash against traditional media, Gasant Abarder of the *Cape Argus* reached out to students via twitter. An invitation to co-edit the newspaper’s next edition was issued to #FeesMustFall protesters:

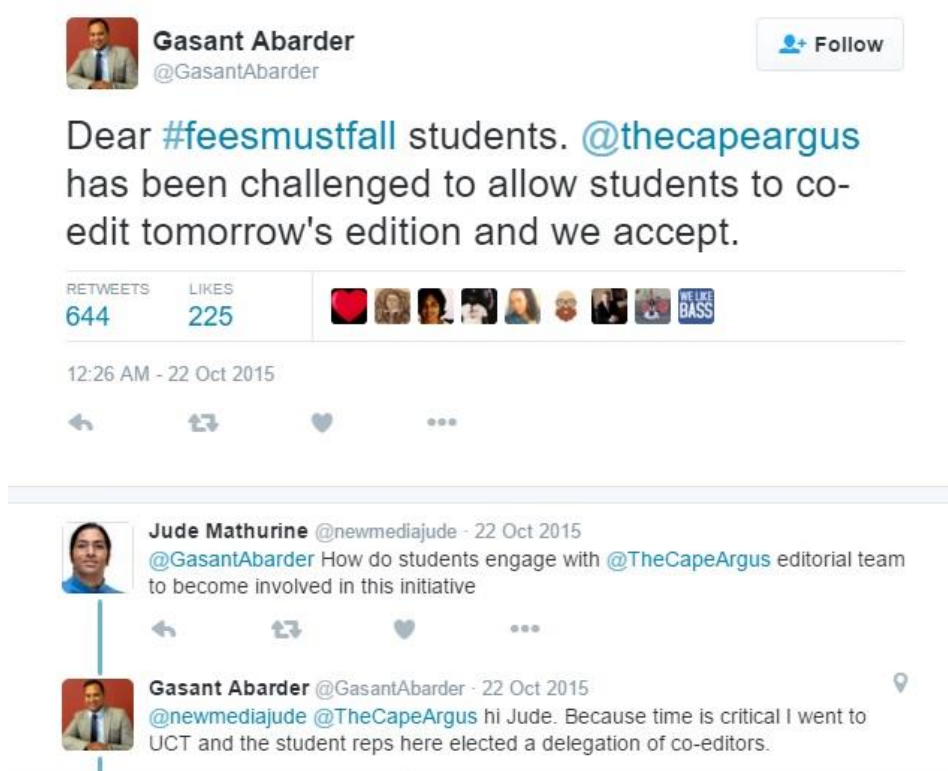


Figure 3.17

Founded in 1857, the *Argus* is one of Cape Town's oldest and most widely-read daily newspapers. Their decision to include the opinions of student protesters in their next publication speaks to the effectiveness of social media in democratizing narrative, and thus knowledge, production. Previously, coverage of any given event was left up to journalists and other professional truth-tellers, with their corporate owners and overseers influencing what information were allowed to see light. Digital technologies and social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook are placing the means of production in the hands of the protesters themselves, thereby enabling them to co-author their own narratives and subsequent histories.

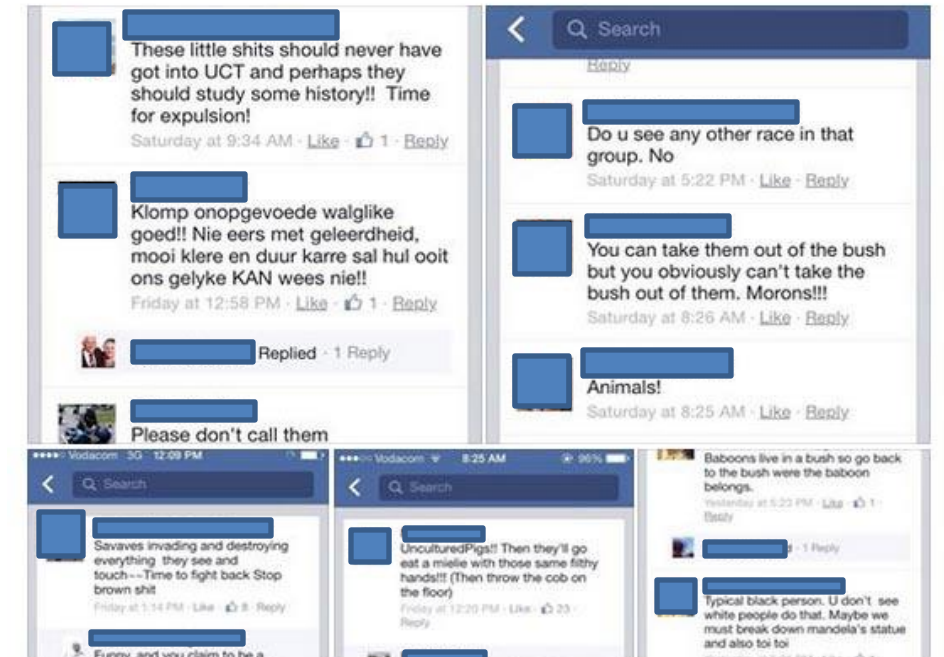
Exposing Racism

Among the many criticisms levelled against the #RhodesMustFall movement was its perceived redundancy. These opinions speak to the efficacy of the narrative of the post-apartheid

“rainbow nation” critiqued in the Facebook post below. That many of those involved in the protests belong to the “born-free” generation – the term used to refer to South Africans born in or after 1994 – was also used to delegitimize their actions. Students were described as “hypersensitive”, entitled, and polarizing. Referring to a surge of activism on college campuses here in the United States, Lukianoff and Haidt employed similar rhetoric in a controversial article for *The Atlantic*, titled, “The Coddling of the American Mind.”⁴⁴

Again, students used social media to resist these dismissive portrayals, challenging the nationalist myth of the rainbow nation in the process. Racist outbursts were screencapped, collaged, republished and circulated under #RacismMustFall to remind detractors of the rampant

This is after a white UCT student wrote "No one really gives 2 flying fucks about you bunch of barbaric kaffirs!!...Apartheid over bitches"
I am not proud to say I study with such people. I blame this 'rainbow nation' nonsense..



discrimination that continues to affect South Africans of color. In these posts, protesters (largely Black) were likened to “animals” – “uncultured pigs” and “baboons” – and “savages”. They were called “barbaric kaffirs” and countless

Figure 3.18

⁴⁴ Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, “The Coddling of the American Mind,” *The Atlantic*, September 2015, accessed January 19, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>

other terms reminiscent of the dehumanizing language used to describe Blacks under colonization and apartheid. This language carried over to the campus' physical, central gathering place, Jammie Plaza, during a botched attempt (on the part of the administration) to gauge student opinion on the statue:

James: They put four, big, white boards in front of his statue with markers attached to them so people could write down their opinions and say – ‘this is what we think, this is why it should be taken down, or why it shouldn’t – and very quickly, all sorts of racist things were written all over it. UCT was totally unaware of the reality and created a situation for really aggressive, racist things to happen, which they should have expected if they had read anything happening on Facebook. They should have expected it.

In the United States, local law enforcement and university administration have taken to monitoring social media apps, such as Yik Yak, for particularly hostile hate speech. Students at Texas A&M, Emory, Michigan State, and other universities were arrested after anonymously threatening to cause harm to students of color protesting the lack of inclusivity on their campuses.⁴⁵ As James explained, the University administration’s failure to monitor the racial climate on social media resulted in an even more hostile environment on campus, again speaking to the importance of social media to the Rhodes Must Fall campaign.

Tools of Inscription

In the third chapter of *How Societies Remember*, Connerton highlights the role of modern technologies in shaping and inscribing memory. With the advent of social media, our technologies have become much more sophisticated than the encyclopedias and sound tapes that he describes. All the same, these tools “require that we do something that traps and holds information long after the human organism has stopped performing” (Connerton 1989, 73).

⁴⁵ Josh Logue, “Who Should Prevent Social Media Harassment?” *Inside Higher Ed*, October 22, 2015, accessed February 17, 2016, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/10/22/colleges-face-new-pressure-monitor-social-media-site-yik-yak>

Knowledge production, and our notions of archive, are constantly being stretched and outright reimagined through social media. Someone, like myself, who wishes to acquaint themselves with the goings on of a particular movement need not only consult textbooks and newspaper articles (which are also becoming increasingly digital). A wealth, and some might even say an overabundance, of information can be derived from tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram pictures, Tumblr and Wordpress blogs, and more.

This is not to suggest, however, that online activism has supplanted more “traditional” forms of protest; to make such a claim would be to belittle the efforts that students have bravely carried out on the ground under a constant threat of violence. These efforts brought about tangible changes – the statue was removed, workers insourced, and the planned fee increase warded off. None of this would have been possible if students did not take to the streets, occupy administrative spaces, and demand that their needs be addressed.

In the concluding chapter of *Coming of Age in Second Life*, Boelstorff argues that the virtual world does not signify post-humaness, but rather makes us “*even more human*” (238). Social media has similarly *enhanced* a crucial moment, very much situated in the real world, serving as an additional platform for discourse – both constructive and destructive – and connecting and mobilizing the people needed to carry the Rhodes Must Fall movement forward. Live-tweeting (and other forms of posting on social media) allowed for the instant documentation of important events, as they unfolded and as they were experienced on the ground. It remains to be seen how this information will be remembered and how this information will be incorporated into the historical archive. Through social media, however, the students involved in Rhodes Must Fall have ensured that their voices will be a part of the narrative.

Chapter 4 Constructing Identity through the Performance of Protest

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Rhodes Must Fall protesters used social media as a means of confronting the problem of memory. From #EndOutsourcing to #FeesMustFall, each new hashtag galvanized students around present-day issues which, while closely tied to the neoliberal politics of democratic South Africa, are very much products of the previous colonial and apartheid regimes. In this chapter, I will focus on how Rhodes Must Fall has used the memory of past protests – namely that of the anti-apartheid struggle – to sustain its own movement. I will also examine how the performative aspect of protest has shaped social identity.

Paul Connerton introduces *How Societies Remember* (1989) with the assertion that “our experience of the present very largely depends on our knowledge of the past” (Connerton 1989, 1). Political leaders, as he later demonstrates through the example of Nazi Germany, have exploited this contingency, appealing to a simplified, “mythicized” past to make claims about the present and the future. Collective memory is organized around this past through commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices. These practices are characterized by rules and repetition that belies their performativity: “commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatism” (Connerton 1989, 5).

Though the terms “ritual” and “ceremony” may carry connotations of religiosity – connotations that Connerton rejects by demonstrating the many ways in which our banal, everyday activities could also be construed as habit and ritual – the author’s arguments can be used to demonstrate how social memory is similarly activated through the performance of protest:

Ntsika: People started singing and protesting, as protests usually go.

Mentioned in passing amid a winding narrative of confusion, fear, and violence leading up to his arrest outside of Parliament, Ntsika's comment is no less revealing. It implies that there are rules – that there is a script – or certain behaviors that dictate how protests take place. As Ntsika's narrative demonstrates, confusion arises when this script is not uniform.

Much of this script is reassembled from previous demonstrations and does, at times, borrow from religious sentiments. This recycling has manifested itself in many ways during the Rhodes Must Fall movement, especially through protest music. In *Sonic Spaces of the Karoo: The Sacred Music of a South African Coloured Community* (2011), ethnomusicologist, Marie Jorritsma, describes hymns and other songs as “hidden transcripts,” “auditory history,” and “an act of musical archiving” (Jorritsma 2011, 42). Appearing as a “veiled discourse of dignity and self-assertion within the public transcript,” these songs serve as both a critique of power and an act of resistance (Jorritsma 2011, 43). *Senzeni Na*, a Xhosa folk song typically sung in religious settings – and later, at the funerals of those killed by the apartheid regime – is no different. It has since become unilaterally associated with the anti-apartheid struggle.

Senzeni na?	What have we done?
Sono sethu, ubumnyama	Our sin is that we are black
Sono sethu yinyaniso	Our sin is the truth
Sibulawayo	They are killing us
Mayibuye i Africa	Let Africa return

Like Connerton, Jorritsma argues that a fundamental aspect of hymns like *Senzeni Na* lies in its performativity: “The key element of these examples is that they are performed, both for the immediate community and also for any powerholder who happens to be present, a characteristic

also found in the ritualized performance of weekly church services” (Jorritsma 2011, 43). Calling for a “return,” the song itself facilitates the remembering of an Africa (presumably) before colonialism. Among the many anti-apartheid choruses sung at Rhodes Must Fall gatherings, the use of *Senzeni Na* can be interpreted as a deliberate choice beyond its lyrical significance. The performance, both literal and figurative, of this protest song invokes the memory of struggle that has been relegated to the confines of the past through the language of “posts” – post-colonial, post-apartheid, post-racial, etc. – and dismissed in an effort to maintain the fiction of peace purported by the narrative of the rainbow nation. The performance of this music – in addition to the rallies, marches, sit-ins, performance art pieces, and other acts associated with protest – is an example of how ritual and commemorative ceremonies shape social identity, in this case, an activist identity.

Political Awakening

The social categorization of youth is at once a nostalgic, yet pitied and unenviable position in society. To be labeled a young person is to be ascribed a variety of adjectives – immature, marginalized, and liminal (to name a few) – that point to a perpetual state of incompleteness. This is especially true of existing literature on African youth who are continually pathologized as both troubled and troubling (Fuh 2009), or, as often occurs in the development world, lamented as an untapped source of latent potential.

Rhodes Must Fall allowed students to resist this marginalization by facilitating an opportunity to participate in something greater than themselves:

Ntsika: Having been part of the Fees Must Fall protests has actually been more practical than saying we want white ideology to be decreased on campus, or we want a more Afrocentric, less Eurocentric curriculum. Those things are ideologically great – on paper they sound like very idealistic things – but not paying an increase in fees for next year is

very practical. Now you see that we've achieved this. The protests have led to this end goal. The protests have led to the removal of the statue, and now protesting has led to not having an increase in fees in the coming year and outsourcing has ended. Practical things that we didn't think would be achieved so quickly and so robustly.

As Ntsika explained, the movement went far beyond ideological dialogue (although that was also an important part of the process). Their actions yielded tangible results that affected the University of Cape Town and the whole country. For many students, Ntsika and James included, the transformative effects of their activism has been a source of great pride:

James: I remember one moment where I actually walked down – I was walking home from campus – among all the people protesting with banners and singing around the statue. I felt a very strong sense of pride. This is really, really cool, and I'm really proud of the fact that this is happening. I recognize that pride is a very self-centered emotion: you're not proud for other people; you're proud of yourself for being associated with other people. There might be certain problems associated with that. But it was a very distinct feeling. I was very proud of the fact that this was happening and that to some degree, I was associated with it.

The students involved in the Rhodes Must Fall protests weren't just coddled, whiny, self-serving millennials, but concerned, passionate activists who were taking steps to create change at their University and in their country.

Among the many questions that have plagued me – and countless others reacting to Rhodes Must Fall – is why now? This statue, as I have explained, has been at UCT since 1934. While it has raised suspicion throughout its many decades of residence at the University, Rhodes Must Fall has constituted the most concerted (and most successful) effort to bring about its demise. There are a number of answers to the question of why now that I will revisit later in this essay. The explanation I will focus on at present brings us back to the fact that, while Rhodes Must Fall used Mr. Rhodes as a springboard, the movement was never solely about the statue. It was also, as I have previously explained, about institutional racism and the lack of support for students of color at UCT. This marginalization did not develop overnight. It is the (unfortunate)

product of decades of racist social, political, and economic policies and attitudes too deeply entrenched to be erased by changes in legislation. For years students have been negatively affected by the implications of these policies and social attitudes, leading many to rightfully surmise that a movement like Rhodes Must Fall was inevitable.

Chrislyn: What would you say sparked the Rhodes Must Fall movement at UCT?

James: Oh, geez!

Chrislyn: (laughter)

James: What sparked it? I feel like it was a combination of a long process. If I were to choose one event, it would be Chumani Maxwele throwing the poo on the statue. You know that whole uh, part of the story.

Chrislyn: Yeah.

James: That would probably be one single event which kind of precipitated it, but it wasn't just that. It was a long process. It's kind of like it reached critical mass. Like something had to happen at that stage. There were too many people at that stage who were starting to realize the problems of institutions and the way that students are dealt with by the institution, and the ideas of the politics of representation, and racial politics...I had a number of conversations where people said things along the lines of: "This has needed to happen for ages and I've always felt these kinds of things, but I've never been able to articulate it. I never quite understood how big these issues are." Lots of people said that Rhodes Must Fall provided a lexicon or a framework which structured their view of these things. These are very intelligent people, very aware, and they know a lot. They are often people in the social sciences who are aware of the whole idea of structures and all that kind of stuff. But of course that knowledge was given from a western perspective, using western theorists, so it didn't quite do justice to their experience. Suddenly there was this body of knowledge – a very strong intellectual foundation – that made sense of their experience. I think lots of people really appreciated that. It was very, very valuable to some people. It became kind of defining to them.

In South Africa, the durational nature of oppression is often obscured due to the absence of narratives of dispossession and disenfranchisement (characteristic of colonialism and apartheid) from the archive and school curricula. After apartheid ended in 1994, state curricula underwent a tremendous overhaul. National curriculum-redesign committees removed history as

a subject required in its own right, relegating it to the all-encompassing umbrella of “human and social sciences.”⁴⁶ “Everybody wanted to turn their faces away from the past,” said Rob Siebörger, a professor of education who contributed to the curriculum redesign.⁴⁷ This refusal to reckon with the past – and acknowledge its presence – has robbed young Black and Coloured South Africans of the opportunity to fully comprehend their present realities. Eve Fairbanks interviewed several of the student leaders of the Rhodes Must Fall protests for a *Guardian* article, titled, “Why South African Students Have Turned on Their Parents’ Generation” (2015). Her findings illustrate the importance of learning about the past as a means of having a better understanding of the present: “Students such as Maxwele, Chikane and Ramaru had little context for the persistence of race in their daily experience. Initially, they would interpret the experiences personally. Why is my family poor? Why did somebody ask me to be her “black friend”? When they finally discovered black history and identity, the lateness of the discovery made them angry.”⁴⁸

Though the Rhodes Must Fall movement galvanized students around a physical object, it also, as James explained, provided them with the language needed to articulate that which they have instinctually known to be true. Light began to trickle into the archive, illuminating the long forgotten and ignored volumes written by African (and African-descended) philosophers and social scientists. From Steve Biko⁴⁹ to Fanon – with particular emphasis on the former – students were finally made aware of the historical conditions that frame their present lives, allowing them to make sense of their experiences as members of a social identity (I live in a township because

⁴⁶ Fairbanks, “Turned On Their Parents’ Generation”

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Steve Biko was an anti-apartheid activist, student leader, and founder of the Black Consciousness Movement. Killed while in police custody in 1977, he became a martyr of the anti-apartheid struggle.

my parents were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands and we can't afford to live elsewhere) and not as an indicator of personal failure (I live in a township because my parents were lazy/never got an education, etc.). This knowledge was incredibly valuable in that it also gave students of color a better sense of who they were.

James: Alex Hendricks, on his birthday, posted this long thing about how Rhodes Must Fall really made him a very particular kind of person and allowed him to realize who he was – I think it was actually something stronger than that, but it was something along those lines. And then afterwards it was like, “oh, yeah, I also turned 22 today.” This was very important. Some people felt very strongly that this was a very important thing for them individually that helped them to make sense of their reality – the discomfort and trauma that they experience every day. It wasn't something that they had been able to articulate before, but Rhodes Must Fall gave them that vocabulary.

Alex Hendricks is also a student at the University of Cape Town. We did not share very many conversations, but I do remember him from my Anthropology of Power and Wealth lectures and tutorials. Like many other students at UCT and beyond, Alex's sense of self was profoundly disturbed and transformed by his participation in the Rhodes Must Fall protests. Reflecting on his motivations for joining the movement in an opinion piece for Eyewitness News, he stated the following:

Hey Alex...you're more white than you are black though right?" Words I'll never forget. They ring in my ears as I reflect on a life that fooled me into believing that South Africa was a rainbow nation. I remember the time, the place. I remember everything about that moment. I carry it with me wherever I go. The unapologetic hate as I march in protest. The guilt as I work tirelessly to de-colonise the University of Cape Town. The fear that whiteness would split yet another coloured boy in half that drove me to join Rhodes Must Fall; the compassion that I found could only exist in Black love that made me realise I could never leave. “Hey Alex...you're more white than you are black though right?" I was stunned because I thought I had fooled him into thinking I was only white. I had the accent. I had *this* accent. I thought I had turned my back on blackness. Of course the trick to true assimilation was to become white without making my transition about race. I had to bury my aspiration with silence. I could never admit that the social construct existed. To talk about race would be the equivalent of tearing a plaster off a wound that was bleeding for just over 20 years of freedom. So I became a professional masochist. It was a subtle violence that I incurred on myself daily. It was the kind of violence that promised liberation from the ridicule of being a Cape-Coloured. Rather white than the laughing stock, the minstrel, the Cape-Coon. Rather white than the identity crisis of South Africa.

“Hey Alex...you’re more white than you are black though right?” I could laugh and cry every time I hear it loud enough. It’s the reason I wake up every day intent on de-colonising, in search of my soul. My path with the movement is one that seeks to reclaim my blackness.⁵⁰

Alex’s testimony reveals a construction of race that is unique to the South African context. Unlike in the United States, where the “one drop rule” continues to reinforce a racial dichotomy of Black *or* white – to the detriment of its large multi-racial/ethnic populations – the categorizations of race in South Africa deserve a chapter of their own. As the token in a group of nearly fifty singers, I often found myself the object of my UCT Choir friends’ favorite game: how can we fluster the American today? (All in good fun, of course.) On one such occasion, my friend Andrew decided to test my boundaries by referring to me as colored. I immediately knew what he was about. What Andrew did not know, however, was that like him, I did not grow up associating the term “colored” with insult. I knew never to use the word *nègre* to describe someone, but, ashamedly, even well into high school I thought “colored” was merely the adjective form of the phrase “of color”. Even now that I know that it is wrong, it still doesn’t carry the same sting that other derogatory language does. Andrew waited futilely for my outrage. “I know that’s a thing here,” I explained, to his consternation. “I’m not going to get mad.” Andrew, like Alex, is Coloured.

Cape-Coloured is a racial classification used to refer to mixed-raced individuals of African (Khoisan or Bantu-speaking) and European ancestry. They form the largest demographic in the Western Cape and belong to the larger Coloured category, which also encompasses South Africans of Asian descent who were originally brought over as slaves from the Dutch colonies on the subcontinent and Indonesia as early as the 17th century. Though all South Africans of

⁵⁰ Christa Eybers & Phumlani Pikoli, “Opinion: Reclaiming My Blackness,” *Eye Witness News (EWN)*, February 24, 2016, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://ewn.co.za/Media/2016/02/24/OPINION-Reclaiming-my-blackness>.

color were considered inherently inferior to those of European ancestry, the apartheid (literally apart-hood) regime reinforced segregation both along and within ethnic/color lines. As with many other countries impacted by colonialism, a racial hierarchy was established that valued features more akin to whiteness. Lighter skin was imbued with a certain cultural capital, even within communities of color.

In a society that very clearly values certain identities – or certain *parts* of one’s identity – more than others, Alex’s narrative highlights the complexities of being Coloured in South Africa. Being upwardly aspirant required that he simultaneously play up his whiteness (the more British sounding, white South African English accent) while repressing his Black heritage. The trauma of being repeatedly split in half induced Alex to join the Rhodes Must Fall collective. Taking part in those protests came to define him, providing him with a community of “black love” as well as a greater sense of purpose and self. For Alex, this refashioned self is rooted in a Black identity that became more accessible through the performance of protest. In Alex’s case, championing this Black identity can be construed as him literally reclaiming the parts of his ancestry that he had previously denied. Through this decision, he is also assuming a political identity that challenges existing biological and social constructions of race. The Rhodes Must Fall collective outlines its definition of Blackness in its mission statement:

Our definition of black includes all racially oppressed people of colour. We adopt this political identity not to disregard the huge differences that exist between us, but precisely to interrogate them, identify their roots in the divide-and-conquer tactics of white supremacy, and act in unity to bring about our collective liberation.⁵¹

Alex Hendricks is far from the only example of this move towards exercising Blackness as a political identity. As I mentioned in chapter four, Ntsika forewent disclosing his ethnic

⁵¹ “Rhodes Must Fall Mission Statement”

identity, referring to himself as a “young Black South African.” Though I did not explicitly ask him to do so (in part because that would be incredibly rude), the fact that he did not volunteer this information is telling. This is contrary to my experience in South Africa, where I found myself constantly having to explain my ethnicity: “You don’t look Xhosa, but you don’t look Zulu.” It usually wasn’t enough to be *just* Black. People wanted to be able to place what *kind* of Black I was. My American accent would typically give me away immediately afterwards, and all is forgiven and forgotten. Alex and Ntsika’s narratives signal a shift away from tribalism ethnic fragmentation towards a more unified identity informed by collective experiences of Blackness. This is not to suggest, as other identity theorists have done, that there is anything inherently wrong with choosing to define themselves in terms of their ethnicity. And there are, as the Rhodes Must Fall mission statement emphasized, huge differences that exist between and within various ethnic groups. Nevertheless, through the act of protest and the intellectual discourse that accompanies it, the Rhodes Must Fall movement has engendered the emergence of Blackness as a collective political identity that disrupts the constructions of race policed during apartheid.

Chapter 5 Reimagining South Africa

“I think for the first time this year, we’ve had really radical and progressive people who have looked at the past of UCT and thought: ‘You know what? Let’s create a different future from what we know UCT as.’” – Ntsika Maki

The production of official narratives by their very nature involves the silencing of multiple subaltern histories, whittling away – either consciously or unintentionally – at the complexities of any singular event until it neatly serves the ends of whichever entity has had it commissioned. Nick Shepherd’s article, *The Retrospective Gaze*, in Siona O’Connell’s curation of apartheid photography entitled, *Martyrs, Saints and Sellouts*, cautions the oversimplification of historical narratives, morally scripted, museumized, and memorialized in service of the state (O’Connell 2012, 3). While a history pre-packaged in palatable doses of information may be attractive for – and even effective in – the widespread export of wholesale ideas, it does not reflect complexities in their entirety. Apartheid photographer, Adil Bradlow, explains in an interview that apartheid “was much more complex than a race war. It was a struggle against poverty, it was a struggle for dignity, it was a struggle for human rights...but to reduce it to a race war would be to miss the point of what was being challenged at the time” (O’Connell 2012, 30). Creating complex narratives is more important than writing rosy histories for the sake of peace and equanimity because of the implications these narratives bear in the present and future. If one describes apartheid as a race war, then the legislation passed in 1994 barring discrimination on the basis of skin color can – and is as of present – be lauded as a grand success. Introducing other elements of struggle – against poverty, indignity, for human rights, and so on – demonstrates that there are many areas in which the anti-apartheid movement has failed. The struggle is far from over.

Ntsika: The past couple of weeks have been a national discourse more than the focus on UCT and that specific statue. I think it has exposed a lot of us to how this country really operates: who the key players are in terms of politics and the economic discourse. I think especially for me – someone who thought I had a really good understanding of why things were the way they were – now I sort of question, for example, the intention of the national government, of the current ruling party, and whether they are as “pro-Black” as they say they are; whether they really have an intention to “liberate” South Africans. I think what has happened is that the achievement of a democratic state has been what the ANC thought was going to be the end goal and then after that, things will just magically fall into place. What has happened is that actually there was something more to be achieved after that. It really hasn’t happened for a lot of people, and people are tired. The reasons these protests happened – that the Rhodes Must Fall protests happened – is that people were tired of feeling like foreigners in their own country. We feel like second class citizens in our own country.

Just over twenty years into liberation, the Rhodes Must Fall movement is saying that anti-discriminatory legislation and democratic elections are not enough. As Ntsika explained, South Africans of color still feel like second class citizens in their own country, and the transformation promised upon the demise of the apartheid regime in 1994 has yet to be actualized. What began as an ideological debate – a clash of historical narratives prompted by conflicting memories of the past – grew into a political movement that not only questioned the structure of the University, but that of the ANC-controlled South African government as well.

Ntsika: Having been arrested on that day in parliament made me see that – you know, we always imagine parliament as like this beautiful, this idea of democracy operating, that the people who are there working to represent the views of the people and the reason they have these heated debates is because they have the people’s hearts in their minds – that the people’s will is on the table. I kind of realized that a lot of politicians and people of influence in this country are self-preserving. Their main interests are themselves and their immediate circles, including members of parliament and people in the cabinet. They’re very disconnected to what a lot of us have been going through. On paper they might say they are. They might have the public policies and have the great stats about what the poverty rates are. But no one really associates what a person growing up in a shack or waking up at 3 or 4 o’clock in the morning to go to work and not earning enough to sustain themselves. That’s become very evident in the past couple of weeks.

While a sharply falling rand has exposed the South African government to criticism well before the Rhodes Must Fall campaign began, this particular movement led students to realize

that ANC leaders and government officials do not have the will of the people in mind. The ANC has had each of their presidential candidates elected, maintaining control of government for over twenty years. The party of Nelson Mandela – of democratic South Africa – they have long been considered the country's most viable political entity. The Rhodes Must Fall movement represents a momentous shift away from this trend, furnishing an opportunity for reimagining what the future of social and political engagement and leadership in South Africa – and UCT, as its premiere institution – could entail:

Ntsika: This is a very interesting time in South Africa's student politics climate. UCT has never been a very active political institution, especially post-apartheid. It's always been an observer of the things that happen and reactionary to the things happen, but it's never really taken initiative to try and create a political discourse. I think for the first time this year, we've had really radical and progressive people who have looked at the past of UCT and thought, 'you know what, let's create a different future from what we know UCT as.' And it's really become a politicized university where dialogue is about social justice, about human oppression...about societal ills and how to fix them – actually having a practical and more robust engagement. In that sense, these protests have led to that.

The Rhodes Must Fall movement is picking up where the anti-apartheid struggle left off, fighting for the betterment of Black lives – educationally, socially, and economically – at the University of Cape Town and beyond. Students like James, Ntsika, and Alex, have professed to their conceptions of self being radically transformed by their participation in these protests. The Rhodes Must Fall movement has similarly transformed how young people conceive of South Africa.

Conclusion

In an article expanding on the toppling of soviet era monuments in Poland and Ukraine, Peter Cheremushkin argues that “[t]hese ongoing battles over monuments are representative of larger struggles over values within and between societies.”⁵² In South Africa, this is tantamount to a struggle over memory and the production of historical narratives. “Forgetting was a central part of the deal the ANC made when it took power from whites after apartheid.”⁵³ Since then, ANC statesmen have fiercely defended the colorblind *kumbaya* narrative of the rainbow nation.” This simplistic, conciliatory narrative is predicated on the erasure of the violent history of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid that continues to affect people of color living in Cape Town. As Chumani Maxwele sought to prove by collecting the bucket of human waste from Kayelitsha, these histories bear continuous implications in the present. During an informal conversation with my friend Zimpande – a UCT student I had met while studying abroad who, in turn, came to study abroad at Boston College after several months of involvement as a photographer and organizer of the Rhodes Must Fall movement – he explained: “Race greatly influences your material consequences in life. Eruptions like Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall are symptomatic of issues on the ground and the failure of economic transformation in South Africa.”

The “larger struggles over values within societies” were apparent throughout the Rhodes Must Fall movement, from the increase in access to (affordable) tertiary education mandated by the #FeesMustFall protests to the reclaiming of Black history and identity made possible through

⁵² Peter Cheremushkin, “When Monuments Fall: The Politics of Toppling Political Sculpture,” *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, January 12, 2012, accessed December 17, 2015, http://rbth.com/articles/2012/01/12/_when_monuments_fall_the_politics_of_toppling_political_sculpture_14179.html

⁵³ Fairbanks, “Turned On Their Parents’ Generation”

activism. I'd like to return to the question of why now. In August of 2014, the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri dominated international headlines. At the time, I was in the middle of my exchange semester in South Africa, reeling from the news, yet wholly unsurprised by the outcome. Having previously traveled outside of the United States, I also knew that my nationality meant that others would look to me as the spokesperson for my country. I fielded numerous questions about the nature of race relations as well as the prevalence of police brutality in the United States. Be it taking shade under the pillars of Jameson Hall during meridian with Claire, Arame, and Zimpande or having a heated debate with the Zimbabwean couple I met at TsiTsi's 21st birthday party, these discussions often (unsurprisingly) revolved around the Black Lives Matter movement. Though this movement grew out of a distinctly American context, it spoke to the diminished status of Black and brown people around the world. BLM has inarguably fostered a heightened sense of social awareness and Black consciousness that is also closely tied to memory. Its social media campaigns have carried their message well beyond the United States, with each new hashtag resisting the erasure and cultural forgetting that accompany rapidly changing news cycles. Even two, three, and four years after their deaths, we still remember the names Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and Trayvon Martin.

In retrospect, my fascination with South Africa and with this project in particular, can be traced to a personal preoccupation with memory. As a child of immigrants who left their country to escape a particularly restrictive political and economic environment, the past was forever present in my home. My understanding of my family's history was divided into two distinct epochs: life before they came to the United States – before I was born – and life afterwards. The stories told by my mother, grandmother, and aunts, were a reminder of how much the afterwards was and is conditioned by the before; a reminder of the only culture I was supposed to have, but

could no longer completely belong to because I was born *lòt bò dlo*. The languages we speak, the food we eat, and the increasingly infrequent trips we've made back to Haiti are a bridge: across the Caribbean Sea and across Time. "Remember where you," meaning I, meaning *we*, "come from." "This is our home, but there is another home that we do not occupy, though it occupies us."

If anything, my fixation on memory has only intensified since deciding to go to college nearly 1,400 miles away from my home in West Palm Beach, Florida. The walls of my dorm room are covered in photos of my favorite moments with family and friends, both old and new. Among them: an "us-ie" of the ever-rowdy alto section on stage before a performance on our week-long choir tour of the Western Cape and a portrait of my dear friend, Phetha, who graduated from UCT right as I was leaving South Africa. I have a small box for keeping letters, postcards, and birthday notes. Then there is the "adventure drawer" filled with wristbands from past concerts, museum guides, international boarding passes, and errant currencies – euros, dong, pounds, and South African rand coins. A Cape Town Metrorail ticket from Mowbray to the penguin beach in Simonstown. These *things*, while not worth much in and of themselves, are important because they allow me to keep pieces of my past alive in the present. The feelings they invoke and the people and moments they symbolize are an integral part of the person I am now and the person I will be in the future. This is why memory matters. This is why memory is so important to examine within the context of the Rhodes Must Fall movement. In maintaining the presence of the past, students were able to make more sense of their current circumstances. This enlightened understanding allowed them to conceive a future different than the ones charted by their ancestors and induced them to take the steps necessary to make the promise of transformation a reality.

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