

WHY DECOLONIZING UCT IS IMPERATIVE

Ntebaleng Morake

University of Cape Town, Public Policy and Administration, International Relations and Gender Studies Student

There's a cluster of raging emotions, slowly penetrating the layers of my shunned upon Brown skin. These raging emotions derive from yearning to be heard, to be seen and to exist freely in the land of my ancestors. And after numerous shouting, throwing feces, occupying administration buildings; hoping to be heard, my Black voices still fails to penetrate and pierce through the walls of white supremacy and white arrogance on this campus; built on blood, and dead bodies and the tears of a people whose pigmentation resembles mine. These raging emotions, with origins from not being seen and being a descant of a people who were stripped from their humanity to being slaves, savages, barbarians and unseen 'othered' and hyper eroticized beings; who are only relevant when the white master shits on his underwear and requires someone to clean after his mess.

I can feel these raging emotions thrusting uncontrollably with utmost resilience; leaving behind stains of relentless grief that reek of nothing but frustration and boiling anger that attempts to voice itself out, but never got given the chance to say salutations; because white supremacy silences it. It silences this rage by reminding us of the Black condition. By reminding us that we call two roomed shacks, who know no romance of electricity and running water in the dusty streets of Tembisa our homes. By reminding us that our high school education occurred in containers that accommodated

an army of Black pupils who had no luxury of placing their childlike finger tips on computer keyboards. By reminding us that the men we call our fathers are boys of the system, who spend long hours of the day gardening and sweeping the white man's yard for R20, and when they get home with a scalp direly kissed by the sun; these men-boys desire to break things out of frustration. But since they cannot afford to break and replace chairs, they break our mother's bones and break us in the process.

UCT and its white arrogance reminds us that we came to this institution with very little knowledge of this language that came with ships, and fists, and violence and moreover forced upon our people. It reminds us that our people live on their knees begging whiteness for their existence, and their survival in a white supremacist capitalist misogynist system; thus, according to UCT we ought to be grateful for being here because, you know; UCT was never built for us. Nonsense!

We are tired. We are angered and we cannot continue to live and learn in a space that denies us of our existence. We cannot continue to be treated as merely anonymous Black faces without a history, because we have a history. And that history did not begin when white colonialist men robbed us off our dignity. It did not begin when they cornered us with their guns and stole our land. It did not begin with slavery and colonialism, nor did it begin with apartheid. We had a history and our own narratives long before that, and by UCT conveniently omitting that in the academic curriculum and symbolic representation of this institution; UCT is omitting us and working into gradually erasing us. Us, people of colour. Us, Black women who carry a multitude of mountains and storms on our exhausted backs.

Us, Black students who desire to be taught by Black female professors. Us, Black students who yearn for UCT to stop acting like Black women are flowers in revolutions and start teaching us about Mama Lillian Ngoyi, Mama Nomzamo Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Mama Charlotte Maxeke, just to name a few. Us, nappy headed Black women with graceful knots in our rich hair, who are suffocated by the shackles of this university that celebrate white supremacy and male entitlement, though celebrating the likes of imperialists and misogynists' such as Cecil John Rhodes, Jan Smuts, Leander Jameson, Barnard Beattie. Us, women who stand in solidarity with sexually assaulted survivors on this campus who have to silently maneuver around UCT with an unbearable shame because they have no alternatives but to share their spaces with their rapists; sit in and be expected to adequately learn when they are in their tutorials; and when they're in a good mood; those rapists will patronizingly smile at them and tell them how they look good today knowing very well how the Discrimination and Harassment office at UCT has failed women at UCT. Us, the brown skinned melanin ones who are scarred by how unAfrican 'Africa's number one university' is; and thus have labored intensely to try find bits of ourselves on the symbolism on this campus, but were accompanied by everything that counted that we are here, even after trying to bury us, we are here. We are enraged!

We are enraged because this single story of history that positions whiteness as triumphs that UCT so chooses to articulate is gigantically undermining to Black pain. It bluntly states that here, on this campus built with the sweat of our people; our pain and lives do not matter; for UCT treats us and the pain carelessly printed on our folded Black foreheads as a

negation of whiteness. We are enraged that on this campus we have no space to breathe because if it is not white colonialists celebrated, it is misogyny or exclusivity. We are enraged and we demand that our campus be decolonized, because this too is our space.

We refuse to be silenced. We cannot be anonymous anymore.