

**Student Protests in South African Universities with Specific
Reference to Rhodes University (1970-1994)**

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Abstract

This thesis is about student protest at Rhodes University from 1970- 1994. It examines how student protests mirrored broader political and economic contexts in this period. Further, this thesis also investigates the changes in student protest over the years. As democracy drew closer, student protests at Rhodes became less apparent. This thesis consults numerous sources which include books, articles, archives and extensive interviews. A significant aspect of this work is that the research on the Black Students Movement at Rhodes University has not been explored in detail, particularly in scholarly works. This thesis therefore contributes to the historiography of black student politics at a historically white university. It also explores the period of democratic transition in South Africa, where secondary issues such as gender and access came to the forefront of student protests. As democracy drew closer, student protests became infrequent on campus due to the changes anticipated under the newly elected democratic government. Despite sparse protests, black students remained sceptical of the democratic transition. The thesis uncovers that many issues were left unresolved which later resurfaced under the 2015 and 2016 #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall and #RURerenceList protests.

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Introduction

This thesis examines student protest at Rhodes University, which is situated in the town of Grahamstown, currently called Makhanda. Both the university and the town have a history of violent conquest and colonialism. Apartheid geography is evident in the layout of the town and university, which finds itself on a former military barracks. Grahamstown was founded in the “wake of the new British administration’s first war of expansion, the fourth frontier war of 1812”.¹ In the 1820s there was an increase in inhabitants of the town; however, race and class divisions were apparent within the community. British scientist Sir John Hershel wrote a letter detailing that he wanted to establish the South African College in the Cape Colony as well as a second college in Grahamstown.² Seventeen years later, St. Andrew's College, a secondary school for white boys, was established. It would later develop a college department which prepared students for their tertiary degree studies. The deputy inspector of schools, JH Brady, noted in his 1884 report that the government “should develop higher education in Grahamstown which was the natural centre for such development in the Eastern Cape”.³ It was decided that a university be established where English and Dutch races could meet on “common ground of academic life”.⁴ These origins demonstrate the institution was intended for Dutch and British scholars, establishing a colonialist culture within the college. In 1904, the college would be renamed to Rhodes University College due to the funding that was received from the Rhodes Trust. The ongoing colonial culture would become a point of contention once there was an increase of black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian enrolments during the 1970s and 1980s. This new cohort of students opposed the apartheid policies of segregation and racial inequalities as well as entrenched colonial culture within the institution. They used protests and resistance politics to voice their concerns.

A key point raised in this thesis is that student protests mirrored broader political and economic contexts in South Africa during the period of 1970 until the end of the 1990s. In addition, the thesis examines the developments and changes in student protest at Rhodes University during

¹ Richard Marshall, *A Social and Cultural History of Grahamstown, 1812 to c1845*, Master of Arts, Rhodes University, December 2008.

² Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History*, (Cape Town, 2017), p.1.

³ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History*, (Cape Town, 2017), p.2.

⁴ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History*, (Cape Town, 2017), p.2.

an era of resistance politics which occurred in the political hotbed of former Grahamstown.⁵ The 1980s was a period of intensified resistance against the state, which responded with heightened repressive laws and regulations. Furthermore, student resistance escalated as there was a growth in the enrolment of black African, 'coloured' and Indian students. Despite the growing mobilisation and politicisation of black students on campus, the university leadership remained largely conservative.⁶ Due to the apolitical stance of leadership and the Student Representative Council (SRC), a significant black-only organisation emerged on campus known as the Black Students' Movement (BSM). Despite the BSM being a Rhodes-only organisation, it also had alliances to broader civic organisations such as the United Democratic Front (UDF). As a consequence of its protests and activities on campus, the BSM was later banned by the state in the late 1980s.⁷ In the 1990s, the BSM reorganised itself as the Black Students' Coordinating Committee (BSCC) which favoured the principles of non-racialism and aligned itself with the broader agenda of national unity. In the 1990s, the BSCC merged with the SRC, which focused on secondary issues that were neglected during apartheid such as women's rights and gender-based violence (GBV) on campus.⁸ In 2015 and 2016, student protests at institutions reignited nationally under the #FEESMUSTFALL protests, which aimed to address the issue of fees for students who fall into the 'missing middle' category.⁹ The second wave of protests, which occurred in 2016 at Rhodes specifically, was the #RURereferenceList Protests which aimed to address the issue of rape and gender-based violence on campus.

The next section will discuss the historiography of university histories, the historiography of the structure of higher education and is followed by the historiography of student protest. The chapter also details the methodology used for this thesis and gives an overview of the chapters to follow.

⁵ Jonathan Ancer, *Betrayal*, (Cape Town, 2019), p.163.

⁶ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History*, (Cape Town, 2017), p.211.

⁷ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History*, (Cape Town, 2017), p.211.

⁸ SRC Minutes: meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, February 1990, (Cory Library).

⁹ The 'missing middle' is defined as students who are financially disadvantaged and cannot afford to go to university, but do not qualify for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding because their income status is above the bracket of R350 000 per annum. NSFAS was established in 1996 by the government to address past inequalities and to address the rising issue of student debt in Higher Education Institutions.

Historiography

There are various texts which have been written on historically white universities; however, the body of works are scant in number and provide limited insights. Scholarly works on white higher education institutions have often drawn on the historical period of the post-South African War and the formation of the early higher education institutions. These works have documented the clear tensions and divisions between the Afrikaner and English-speaking South Africans who sought to create institutions of higher learning.

Bronwyn Strydom demonstrates that university histories in the contemporary period are becoming an interest point for scholarship. Strydom notes that the legacy of apartheid and its influence is apparent amongst histories from former black and white institutions. Some institutions have reflected critically on their past, and on current and “former institutional identities”.¹⁰ Some institutions have remained “insular and inward-looking”.¹¹ Works such as Thelma Neville and Richard Buckland’s *A Story of Rhodes University: Rhodes University 1904-2004*, celebrate the centenary history of Rhodes and avoids “difficult topics and a critical approach”.¹² This is true of other university histories, that do not reflect critically on the colonial history of English-language institutions. One text which fails to critically examine English-language institutions is Howard Phillips’ *The University of Cape Town*. His work discusses the founding of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and its history as the first university established as the South African College in 1829 under the Cape government and was later known as UCT.¹³ Its mandate was to unify English and “Dutch” residents in a post-South African War context. The primary focus of the government was to establish a unified and national institution which excluded black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian students. Its objective was to continue the colonial “civilising mission”.¹⁴ Although this work does not provide a critique of the institutions’ colonial foundations, it demonstrates that the integrated network of financiers of the university would expand their colonial project in the establishment

¹⁰ Bronwyn Strydom, “South African University history: a historiographical Overview”, *African Historical Review*, 48, 1, p.63.

¹¹ Bronwyn Strydom, “South African University history: a historiographical Overview”, *African Historical Review*, 48, 1, p.75.

¹² Bronwyn Strydom, “South African University history: a historiographical Overview”, *African Historical Review*, 48, 1, p.75.

¹³ Howard Phillips & Hector Robertson, “The South African College and the Founding of UCT” in *The University of Cape Town 1918-1948*, (Cape Town,1993), p.1.

¹⁴ Howard Phillips & Hector Robertson, “The South African College and the Founding of UCT” in *The University of Cape Town 1918-1948*, (Cape Town,1993), p.3.

of white higher education institutions across South Africa – more particularly English language institutions.

Another text that provides a largely uncritical institutional history is Ronald Fairbridge Currey's book *Rhodes University 1904-1970: A Chronicle*. Currey's work romanticises the institution and writes favourably about its early formation in 1904 until 1970.¹⁵ His work fails to explore resistance at the university or to reflect critically on colonialism within the institution. In addition, Currey's engagement with student affairs and resistance is limited. He notes that the SRC worked extensively to represent all students, however failed to acknowledge the exclusive whiteness of its membership and the lack of engagement with the oppressions faced by marginalised students on campus.¹⁶

This colonial history and institutional culture have dominated for many years on campus. In recent years, historians have attempted to explore universities histories through a more critical lens. Paul Maylam's work titled *Rhodes University 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* is one example of a critical university history. Maylam's book is unique as it covers an extensive period of the university's history. Maylam critiques the university and highlights that although Rhodes was considered a liberal institution, it was complicit with state policy. He highlights the need for open universities to critically engage with the past. His work also details the various experiences of students at the university and takes into account race, and explores secondary issues such as gender which have been largely ignored in most university histories. He further explored issues such as rape culture and sexual violence on campus. In addition, he examined student protest at the university; however, this is not the main focus of the book. His work reflects on Rhodes as a heteronormative and colonial institution which has found itself in the midst of recent transformation debates. His work aids the historical understanding of Rhodes' past and provides a critical context for further engagement on decolonisation and transformation.

Another example of a critical university history that explores the colonial orientation of English-language institutions is Hendricks' article, "The Mafeje affair". More particularly, Hendricks provides insight into the inherent racism that persisted in historically white universities regardless of the university being classified as 'liberal'. Hendricks writes that "the liberal critique of apartheid from English-medium universities rests on very shaky foundations.

¹⁵ Ronald Fairbridge Currey, *Rhodes University 1904-1970: A Chronicle*, (Wynberg,1970). p.115.

¹⁶ Ronald Fairbridge Currey, *Rhodes University 1904-1970: A Chronicle*, (Wynberg,1970). p.115.

It is not merely a question of the irrelevance of liberalism in the face of the racist repression of apartheid. Instead it points to a much closer meeting of the minds between apartheid ideologies and the principle of one of South Africa's premier English-medium universities".¹⁷ Despite universities, such as UCT, distancing themselves from apartheid ideology, the tertiary landscape perpetuated problematic exclusionary policies. At UCT, there was a "climate of surveillance and repression with universities doing their bit to ensure conformity to racist policies in the sphere of higher education".¹⁸ State repression further manifested itself when UCT received a letter from the state which questioned the appointment of a black African lecturer in the Anthropology department, Archie Mafeje. The SRC handed over various demands which included a protest to ensure academic freedom and to reconsider the appointment of Mafeje.

Teresa Barnes' book titled *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation* argues that it is necessary to examine the positioning of English-language universities under apartheid in order for transformation in South African universities and UCT to be achieved.¹⁹ She highlights that the educational project at UCT is deeply connected to the system of colonialism and that it manifests itself in its curriculum and its physical geography, which reflect a "racialised and gendered power".²⁰ An example of this manifestation is noted through the separate amenities of service staff who are excluded from using university facilities which are generally open to staff and students on campus. This is reflective of the physical geography of apartheid which has not been addressed.²¹ Her work reflects critically on UCT's history and provides a new framework for understanding South African liberalism. She problematises the term liberalism in its rootedness in colonialism, particularly at universities such as UCT. Barnes further offers "a feminist perspective on institutional time and space".²² Barnes work is therefore unique in its critical analysis as it offers a feminist perspective, which was neglected in the history of universities.

¹⁷ Fred Hendricks, "The Mafeje Affair: The University of Cape Town and Apartheid", *Journal of African Studies*, 67,3, p.423.

¹⁸ Fred Hendricks, "The Mafeje Affair: The University of Cape Town and Apartheid", *Journal of African Studies*, 67,3, p.424.

¹⁹ Teresa Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation*, (New York, 2019), p.125.

²⁰ Teresa Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation*, (New York, 2019), p.134.

²¹ Teresa Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation*, (New York, 2019), p.140.

²² Teresa Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation*, (New York, 2019), p.4.

Although these critical histories provide a good understanding of the colonial foundations of English-language universities and their complicity with the apartheid regime, there are a number of gaps that my work addresses. This thesis differs from previous scholarship as it examines the role of a significant black-only organisation at a historically white university. While it is important to examine the history of universities, it is also necessary to consult literature on the structure of higher education in South Africa. The next section will examine the historiography of the structure of higher education.

The historiography of the structure of higher education includes two key contributions from scholars such as Ian Bunting and Reitum Obakeng Mabokela. Both scholars investigate the structure of higher education under apartheid, however, Mabokela traces the historiography to the early “contest between the British and the Dutch”.²³ Both Bunting and Mabokela note that historically white institutions were divided into English and Afrikaans speaking universities. Afrikaans universities such as the University of Stellenbosch, the University of Orange Free State and the University of Pretoria were in favour of state policy and favoured the enrolments of white Afrikaans-speaking students. Bunting examines English-speaking universities which were unsupportive of the apartheid states segregationist policies, however they accepted state funding subsidies to ensure their financial stability. English-speaking universities accepted black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian students who obtained a permit from the Ministry of Education for degrees not offered by Historically Black Universities (HBUs). Mabokela notes that Historically Black Universities were established after the implementation of the 1959 Extension of Universities Act. This Act sought to create an educated skilled black labour force which would support the expanding economy during the 1960s.²⁴ These works inform this thesis as they provide insight into the structure of higher education institutions under the apartheid state. These works provide a historical context for this thesis on Rhodes University. While Mabokela’s work focuses on the legislation which prohibited the admission of black students at historically white universities, she does not examine the complexities of English-speaking universities such as Rhodes.²⁵ Although Rhodes university permitted a very limited number of black students to enrol, it practiced segregation based on inherent established colonial institutional culture. Black, ‘coloured’ and Indian students were allocated to residences

²³ Reitumeste Obakeng Mabokela, *Voices of Conflict: Desegregating South African Universities*, (New York & London,2000) p.15.

²⁴ Ian Bunting, *Transformation of Higher Education* (New York,2006), p.38.

²⁵ Reitumeste Obakeng Mabokela, *Voices of Conflict: Desegregating South African Universities*, (New York & London,2000) p.16.

designated for black students. These residences were generally located on the outskirts of the university. Facilities available to students also remained segregated such as the swimming pool.

Research by Bunting notes that English-language universities such as the Universities of Cape Town, Natal and the Witwatersrand referred to themselves as 'liberal' universities. This meant that they refused to adopt the apartheid government's view that universities were pawns of the state.²⁶ Bunting notes an ambiguity within these universities as they accepted apartheid state funding; however, they strove for autonomy and liberalism which resulted in contestation with the government. In some instances, these universities would profess their liberalism publicly, yet still comply with state authority through their institutional policies and consultation with the government. It is thus important to problematise the term 'liberal' in this thesis. Bunting's work informs this thesis as it provides perspective into the fact that historically white English-speaking universities such as Rhodes were not exempt from state control.

These works enable this project to examine the lack of reform that would occur at Rhodes University. Structurally Rhodes University was an English-speaking university which claimed to be a 'liberal' institution and was critical of the state. However, it was still dependent on state subsidies and support in order to function and thus remained complicit to state policy. Its leadership also reflected the paternalistic attitudes that were prevalent in white universities. The leadership navigated their policies and actions within the university cautiously in order to retain state funding whilst simultaneously appearing to support the growing resistance to apartheid. Student protests mirrored broader political resistance. The next section will discuss the historiography of student protests.

One significant scholarly contribution to the historiography of student protests is Badat's *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and apartheid: From SASO to SANSCO*. His work examines national student organisations such as the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), which was a significant black-only organisation that split from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) at a conference held at Rhodes University in 1967. Badat notes that black students who were part of NUSAS began to experience a sense of frustration and "disillusionment" with the organisation as it could not serve the long-term needs of black students.²⁷ Steve Biko then led a walkout at the conference calling for a separate organisation in which black students represented themselves. Rhodes University is a significant place, as it

²⁶ Ian Bunting, *Transformation of Higher Education* (New York, 2006), p.37.

²⁷ Saleem Badat, *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and Apartheid: From SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*, (Pretoria, 1990), p.83.

is both where Biko led the breakaway from NUSAS and where SANSCO agreed to reunite with NUSAS in favour of transitional politics in the 1990s.²⁸ It is therefore essential that student organisations at Rhodes University be examined due to their growing mobilisation against the state and their political mirroring of broader national political trends.

Badat's work provides insight into the formation of SASO at historically black universities (HBUs) and notes that these institutions were not created to enable "dissidents".²⁹ The HBUs were created to win students in favour of the separate development project.³⁰ He notes the surprising formation of SASO given these circumstances, which played an important role in creating black opposition to apartheid. Similarly, a radical black-only organisation was formed at Rhodes namely the Black Students' Movement. The BSM was formed due to historically white universities being subservient to state policy and to create representation for black students. It furthered the aims of political resistance at Rhodes. The BSM was in favour of black consciousness ideology and also supported UDF politics. Little has been written on black student politics at historically white universities such as Rhodes. This thesis therefore contributes further to the historiography of radical student organisations at a historically white university, particularly by examining the role and influence of the BSM.

SASO's influence was also noted at the University of the North (Turfloop). GM Nkondo's *Turfloop testimony* details a memorandum used for the Snyman commission,³¹ which detailed matters related to the University of the North (Turfloop) during the 1970s.³² The University of the North is one of the historically black universities where anti-apartheid activism became prominent and students were influenced by black consciousness through SASO. Historically black universities were intended to encourage separate – and eventually autonomous – development; however, the university remained state controlled.³³ Consequently, dissent grew amongst students and was reflected through student activism. Nkondo provides a detailed account of student resistance against the state. This is demonstrated through the actions of a young activist and SRC member, Abram Tiro. Tiro gave a speech at his graduation ceremony

²⁸ Saleem Badat, *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and Apartheid: From SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*, (Pretoria, 1990), p.83.

²⁹ Saleem Badat, *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and Apartheid: From SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*, (Pretoria, 1990), p.86.

³⁰ Saleem Badat, *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and Apartheid: From SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*, (Pretoria, 1990), p.86.

³¹ The Snyman commission was a state appointed, one-man commission which investigated student unrest at the University of the North.

³² GM Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony Dilemma of a Black University in South Africa*, (Johannesburg, 1976), p.20.

³³ GM Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony Dilemma of a Black University in South Africa*, (Johannesburg, 1976), p.20.

that was critical of the apartheid state and Bantu Education.³⁴ As a result of this, he was expelled from the university. Further expulsions occurred for students who supported Tiro. Divisions also became more apparent between staff associations as the white staff association were in favour of the expulsion. This demonstrated their resistance to change. Nkondo's work examined the importance of Tiro and other students who were expelled from Turfloop and later politicised the youth within the secondary sector as teachers.³⁵

Further scholarly research by Heffernan contributes to the historiography of student protest at the University of the North (Turfloop). Heffernan's work, titled "Black Consciousness's Lost Leader: Abram Tiro", details the significance of the University of the North and Tiro in South African student politics. Both were neglected from South Africa's narrative of student protests because of the dominant Biko narrative in black activism history.³⁶ She notes that rural regions were omitted from the historical narrative of student protests.³⁷ Heffernan's most recent work, *Limpopo's Legacy*, contributes to the historiography of student protest as it explores the regional influences which have supported South African student politics from 1960 to the present. She further argues that her research takes into consideration the importance of the regional interactions between the authorities of Venda, Gazankulu and Lebowa and the government. These interactions "shaped conditions for young people in their territories in ways that affected political ideas and activism at a national level".³⁸ My work contributes further to the historiography of student protest as I examine Rhodes University, a historically white university which witnessed protests in the late 1970s. Little has been written on student protests at historically white universities, especially universities such as Rhodes which are situated in a rural landscape.

Heffernan and Nieftagodien's edited volume *Students Must Rise* contributes to the historiography of student protest in South Africa, as it examines various key role-players that undermined the apartheid state through political protest. The Soweto Uprising is noted as a "decisive" turning point in the struggle against apartheid which changed the country's political landscape.³⁹ SASO's relationship to the student governance at the institution enabled the

³⁴ GM Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony Dilemma of a Black University in South Africa*, (Johannesburg,1976), p.25.

³⁵ GM Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony Dilemma of a Black University in South Africa*, (Johannesburg,1976), p.24.

³⁶ Anne Heffernan, "Black Consciousness's Lost Leader: Abraham Tiro, the University of the North, and the Seeds of South Africa's Student Movement in the 1970s", *Journal of African Studies*, 41,1, p.173.

³⁷ Anne Heffernan, "Black Consciousness's Lost Leader: Abraham Tiro, the University of the North, and the Seeds of South Africa's Student Movement in the 1970s", *Journal of African Studies*, 41,1, p.173.

³⁸ Anne Heffernan, *Limpopo's Legacy*, (Braamfontein,2019), p.9.

³⁹ Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien, *Students must Rise: Youth Struggle in South Africa Before and Beyond Soweto '76*, (Johannesburg, 2016), p.98.

successful mobilisation of students.⁴⁰ In recent years the retelling of the histories of student movements has become popular due to the #FeesMustFall Movement. Their work offers a broad telling of student engagement which previous narratives have failed to offer. The book aims to connect both rural and urban communities.⁴¹

Further scholarly contributions have been made by Thomas in “Disaffection, Identity, Black Consciousness and a New Rector: An Exploratory Take on Student Activism at the University of the Western Cape 1966–1976”. It examines student activism at UWC and explores the experiences of ‘coloured’ students under apartheid and their rejection of the ‘coloured’ category in favour of a broader black identity.⁴² He notes an incident where students burnt their ties as support for their peer who was ordered out of a classroom for not wearing the appropriate attire. The incident demonstrated the growth of dissatisfaction amongst the youth with the apartheid state and the university management. Thomas notes that it was only in the 1970s that UWC elected its first SRC after Barney Pityana, founding member of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) visited the campus and mobilised students around SASO. Thirty-five students from UWC attended intervarsity held at Ngoye (University of Zululand) where they had “forged links” with SASO and returned to the Bellville campus as SASO ambassadors.⁴³ Students elected a “black consciousness SRC” under Peter Lamoela. During this time, the SRC had endorsed Abram Tiro’s speech that was made at a Turfloop graduation. Thomas’s work demonstrates the growing activism at historically black universities and the apartheid state more broadly. His work contributes towards the narrative of student protests, however limited research has been conducted on student protest at historically white universities.⁴⁴

Muhammed Ahmed’s “On the Black Students Movement” informs this thesis specifically with reference to the BSM at Rhodes University. In the United States, the Black Students’ Movement was notable in empowering African American students in resisting the oppression they faced.⁴⁵ Civil disobedience occurred which resulted in the emergence of mobilised youth

⁴⁰ Anne Heffernan, “The University of the North”, in Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds), *Students must Rise: Youth Struggle in South Africa Before and Beyond Soweto ’76*, (Johannesburg, 2016), p.98

⁴¹ Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien, *Students must Rise: Youth Struggle in South Africa Before and Beyond Soweto ’76*, (Johannesburg, 2016), p.98.

⁴² Cornelius Thomas, “Disaffection, Identity, Black Consciousness and a New Rector: An Exploratory Take on Student Activism at the University of the Western Cape 1966–1976”, *South African Historical Journal*, 54,1,2005, p.74.

⁴³ Cornelius Thomas, *Disaffection, Identity, Black Consciousness and a New Rector: An Exploratory Take on Student Activism at the University of the Western Cape 1966–1976*, *South African Historical Journal*, 54,1,2005, p.74.

⁴⁴ Cornelius Thomas, *Disaffection, Identity, Black Consciousness and a New Rector: An Exploratory Take on Student Activism at the University of the Western Cape 1966–1976*, *South African Historical Journal*, 54,1,2005.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Ahmad, “On the Black Students Movement 1960-1970”, *The Black Scholar*, 9,9,1978, p.2.

organisations such as the Black Panthers who were a revolutionary socialist organisation. Due to their emergence, divisions amongst the community and students occurred as the Black Panthers were more radical in their politics and protests which differed from the Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. The Black Panthers were met with violence, arrests and assassinations by the FBI.⁴⁶ This article provides perspective into the growth of African American student organisations and their influence on resistance politics in the United States. This article informs my understanding of black student politics in South Africa who were inspired by Biko and international groups such as the Black Panthers.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was used for the purpose of this thesis. Qualitative research emphasises fine-grained and in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon as opposed to a quantitative approach which uses a numerical data set and quantifiable data in its analysis.⁴⁷ The University Archives were used for this research and are located at the Cory Library at Rhodes University. These resources included Senate Minutes, NUSAS minutes and SRC minutes. The thesis also drew on student newspapers such as *Rhodeo* and various other student organisations' documents such as newsletters and pamphlets. This research used a broad range of sources from the university's archive in order to cross-reference relevant data that appeared across the sources pertaining to the thesis topic of student protest. Interpretation issues occurred due to the brevity of Senate and SRC minutes, which often only summarised topics discussed in meetings. My interviews helped me to corroborate and further understand the issues that were dealt with in the archived documents.

The SRC minutes range from the mid-1960s until 1992. They provide incredible insight into the various issues raised on campus at the time, as well as confirmation of a white dominant leadership on campus. In this archive, there was no critical dialogue on issues faced by black African students during this time in SRC meetings. This issue was resolved by interviewing various BSM members. This research also drew on critiques of the SRC in the student newspaper *Rhodeo*. The SRC documented its support of the end of apartheid but displayed ineffective leadership to mobilise students and facilitate meaningful change. In these archives it is apparent that the SRC only challenged its own white-led representation in the 1990s when transitory politics were at the forefront of the national agenda.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Ahmad, "On the Black Students Movement 1960-1970", *The Black Scholar*, 9, 9, 1978, p.2.

⁴⁷ Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 4th edition, (New York), p.389.

NUSAS minutes were also consulted and provided context of the national agenda and its impact on a local campus. It is apparent from these minutes that NUSAS also faced its own internal fractures with regards to centre membership.⁴⁸ As a consequence of these internal fractures, the Rhodes SRC disaffiliated from NUSAS for various reasons. One of the main evident issues is a lack of cohesiveness and communication between various campuses. This informed my reading of student politics during the 1970s and 1980s, as it clarified why black African students disaffiliated from NUSAS, and it is evident that this multi-racial student organisation was futile in its actions to address the issues faced by black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian students.

Private archives of various research participants were also consulted for additional resource material ranging from photos, letters and scrapbooks. These individuals collected various material that was produced while they were students at Rhodes University. Some of these documents provided useful information due to the university archive being incomplete.

Semi-structured interviews were also used as a form of qualitative data collection for the purpose of this research. The in-depth interviews made use of set questions; however, due to the research being qualitative in nature, it enabled the participant to share what they viewed as relevant. The interviews were rich in data and contributed to enhancing the archive and clarifying the issues that were not sufficiently documented. Interviews typically lasted forty-five minutes to an hour depending on the level of response from each participant. The interviews were typically conducted in participants’ offices or homes where they felt at ease to communicate freely. As part of ethical processes, consent forms were completed by all respondents. This enabled participants to choose anonymity or have their names disclosed. It was noted that interviewees who had chosen anonymity disclosed more sensitive material. Participants who were students at Rhodes during the 1970s were selected through a process of snowball sampling. Prior to a process of snowball sampling, I interviewed students who became lecturers at the university. They referred me to friends and family that they believed would be open to being interviewed. Snowball sampling proved to be the best method for this research, as the process of referrals enabled me to reach a variety of individuals who were identified as relevant from the archive. In addition, access was granted to those individuals who were not actively visible in the archive, but played a key role in student politics at the time. I extended the interviews to both academic and support staff to gain varied perspectives.

⁴⁸ Centre membership is defined as institutional affiliation to NUSAS through a majority student vote.

Individuals of various genders and races were consulted for the purpose of the thesis with the intention of gaining broad insight into the experiences of students. One limitation of the snowballing method was that the participants were closely linked in their social affiliation to each other. They tended to give the same narrative, perhaps because of these ties. This is particularly relevant to the 1970s research, as limited racial and gender diversity was observed. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, there were more diverse participants due to the increased enrolments of black African, 'coloured' and Indian students.

Questions were designed to facilitate in-depth interviews that provided the participants with the opportunity to share their detailed experiences. More specific questions were asked which focused on the reason for student protests and the ways in which they manifested themselves within the university. Questions around organisational politics were also asked in order to gain a sense of the dynamics within student organisations. These questions also examined the university's response to the protests which aided the research in understanding further eruptions of protests, because of the complicity by the university leadership.

In this thesis a chronological and thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis is defined as identifying and analysing themes which are present in the collected data. This enabled links to be drawn between participants' stories which had often been omitted from the narrative, but through the interview process enabled an engagement with the experiences of student activists at the time. The qualitative data which was collected provided my research with a layered level of engagement. One weakness often associated with qualitative data is that there are overwhelming amounts of information.⁴⁹ I transcribed the interviews verbatim from what interviewees stated and through this process could identify key themes that arose across the collective participants.

These participants provided diversified perspectives of the apartheid era. Despite interviews proving useful for the purpose of this research it is also important to consider that oral accounts can be distorted through perspectives of the individual, their memories and extended time.⁵⁰ I also regarded the social position of the participant when examining interview data as it informed their worldview and perspective of the historical narrative.

⁴⁹ Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 4th edition, (New York), p.415.

⁵⁰ Phillipe Denis, "Introduction" in *Oral History in a Wounded Country. Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, Phillipe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane (eds), (Durban, 2008).

In my first chapter it can be noted that all participants were white men who dominated student leadership positions and the profile of campus at large during the 1970s. Due to the low enrolments of black African students at the time, it was a research challenge to gain the perspective of black African students, and this is therefore a limitation of my data from this period. The research does not, however, account for black African, 'coloured' and 'Indian' participants in the 1970s. The reason for this is that it was difficult to track the few students who fitted this profile at the time. Secondly, some who were approached stated that they did not want to re-live the painful experience of apartheid. I attempt to resolve this issue in my chapter on the 1980s where there was an increase of black African, 'coloured' and Indian students. Through snowball sampling I was able to access diverse participants across the racial and gender categories. The limited data on the Black Students' Movement necessitated the use of interviews in order to reflect the experiences of politically active black African students on campus. These interviews allowed for my research to contribute to a missing narrative of black African history at Rhodes University. Various members were interviewed and provided valuable perspective into the organisation's politics which, whilst initially rooted in black consciousness, aligned with UDF politics. The initial reviewed photos of the BSM gave limited detail about the organisation's purpose and experiences. The interviews formed an essential component of this research as well as provided a unique historical record on black African student politics and resistance at Rhodes University.

For my third chapter, which covers the 1990s at Rhodes university, I consulted the oral memory of diverse participants as the racial composition of campus diversified with the advent of democratic change. Participants of various races, genders and marginalised communities were consulted for this chapter. This assisted in an intersectional analysis of student politics at the time which reflected that student politics was still heavily racialised and dominated by white narratives.

The community of Rhodes University consists of staff and students, and it was imperative to include the experiences of both academic and support staff at Rhodes University. This enabled me to document their experiences, views and perspectives about student politics and protests at the time. These interviews provided perspective in order for me to understand the various policies and procedures followed by the university. They also provided insight into the pressures faced by the university leadership during a turbulent era. Leadership highlighted the difficult position of adhering to state policy whilst claiming to address students' needs. The

thesis confirms complicity by the university through various examples demonstrating the lack of will to resolve student-related issues.

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 demonstrates that protests at Rhodes University during the 1970s were few due to most of the student body being almost entirely white and conservative. The university was under conservative leadership at the time, and this influenced the way in which it responded to student activism that occurred on campus. Most of the protests that did occur on campus during the 1970s were led predominantly by white liberal students. The chapter provides a critique on student politics at Rhodes, noting that multiracial politics was futile in its endeavour, and that it therefore witnessed the breakaway of black African students from NUSAS. Due to the breakaway, SASO was formed in an effort to address the issues faced within tertiary institutions. Chapter 2 examines the rise of the Black Students' Movement (BSM), which sought to give black African students a voice and challenged racism within the university through various protests. These protests were successful in placing pressure on leadership. Chapter 3 examines student protest at Rhodes during the transitory phase towards democracy. This chapter argues that student protest during this time was less centred around issues of race but rather emphasised issues of gender and gender-based violence on campus. This chapter demonstrates that, despite the more apparent concern with the rights of women, student organisations were not intersectional in their approach and were still largely concerned with the rights of white women.

Notes on terms

This thesis uses the term 'Black African' to refer to those who are historically from the Bantu-speaking peoples of South Africa. The term 'coloured' will be used in the thesis with single quotation marks to indicate that it is a racialised term that was used during the apartheid era.⁵¹ 'Coloured' refers to a "self-description" of many slave descendants from Cape Town in the period of 1875-1910.⁵² The term 'black' is generally used in this thesis as a political term rooted in black consciousness ideology under Steve Biko, which was inclusive of black African, 'coloured' and Indian people.⁵³ This indicates that these terms are based on historically

⁵¹ Janeke Deodata Thumbran, "The 'Coloured Question' and the University of Pretoria: Separate Development, Trusteeship and Self Reliance, 1933-2012", Doctor of Philosophy, University of Minnesota, December 2018.

⁵² Janeke Deodata Thumbran, "The 'Coloured Question' and the University of Pretoria: Separate Development, Trusteeship and Self Reliance, 1933-2012", Doctor of Philosophy, University of Minnesota, December 2018.

⁵³ Steve Biko, *I write what I like*, (South Africa, 2017).

constructed identities by the apartheid state, and that it is not used with the intent of reinforcing such colonial terms.

Chapter 1: Rhodes University and White Liberalism in the 1970s

“These are the people who claim that they too feel the oppression just as acutely as the blacks and therefore should be jointly involved in the black man’s struggle for a place under the sun. In short, these are the people who say that they have black souls wrapped up in white skins.”⁵⁴

Introduction

In the 1970s, apartheid was heightened under intensified government policies. Forced removals of black African communities in South Africa occurred as part of the state’s human control. There was an increase of detentions without trial and censorship regulations were also implemented to silence citizens. Protest was deemed illegal by the state; but students generally became more radical in their responses to the government. At Rhodes University however, protest activity was limited in the 1970s, which mirrored the structure of the predominantly white student body and the conservative leadership of the university. The Vice-Chancellor (VC) at the time was Dr Derrick Henderson, who, despite claiming to be progressive, perpetuated conservatism in the ethos of the university. The Student Representative Council (SRC) claimed to occupy a liberal stance in the context of their times; however, their views guised a nuanced conservatism. Protest at Rhodes was uncoordinated and sporadic with only a small group of student participants. The few protests that occurred consisted of a Biko memorial protest, and a Quad Squat protesting the forced removals of the local black African community. In response to the Quad Squat, a conservative protest was held which demonstrated the conservatism within the majority student body and within the institution. This chapter argues that these protests were driven by white students on behalf of black African, Indian and ‘coloured’ students, with the intention of highlighting the need to end apartheid. Due to white privileged leadership of these protests, black African students’ agency was diminished. The chapter will discuss the political context of the 1970s, demonstrating its impact on the education sector and the rise of resistance to broader national issues. The chapter will demonstrate that activism at Rhodes in the 1970s was infrequent, and that, despite a few protests by ‘liberal groups’, the university perpetuated conservatism that resonated favourably with the apartheid government.

⁵⁴ Steve Biko, *I write what I like* (Johannesburg, 2004), p.20.

Political context of the 1970s

The political climate of the 1970s intensified under state repression with unfair detentions of citizens who challenged the state or were involved in protests. State repression intensified in the schools under the system of Bantu Education which “reflected (sic) the dominance of the ideology of white rule and superiority”.⁵⁵ The system of Bantu Education aimed at protecting white Afrikaner interests and capital. Consequently, black African students were subjected to careers such as teachers, nurses and artisans which provided support and service to the Bantustans. The African National Congress (ANC) started facilitating the boycott of Bantu Education in the 1950s; however, these attempts were unsuccessful due to the ANC’s “inability” to provide an “institutional alternative”.⁵⁶ The ANC could not formally provide an educational alternative as they were banned and operated from abroad and underground. Alternative leadership was sought by black Africans and the growth of youth organisations at a local level which provided a network for students to mobilise. This filtered into the educational sector which was evident in the school boycotts and the culmination of the Soweto Uprising.

Students who were involved in the 1976 Soweto Uprising were mainly influenced by the ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement. Black consciousness, under Steve Biko, was a grassroots anti-apartheid movement that emerged in the mid-1960s and influenced the youth through the 1970s in anti-apartheid resistance and protests. Biko’s core principles were centred around the notions of black driven leadership, black resilience, and organising black politics independently from multiracial politics. Multiracial politics was deemed futile by Biko. Biko defined black consciousness as “not a matter of pigmentation” but a “reflection of mental attitude”.⁵⁷ He further defined the notion of being “black” as “those who can manage to hold their heads high in defiance rather than willingly surrender their souls to the white man”.⁵⁸ These philosophies influenced black African students in resisting the system of oppression through nationwide protests. This manifested itself in the secondary and tertiary sectors against the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and The Extension of Universities Act 1959.

⁵⁵ Saleem Badat, *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and Apartheid: From SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990* (Pretoria, 1990), p.50.

⁵⁶ Jonathan Hyslop, *The Classroom Struggle: Policy and Resistance in South Africa 1940-1990* (Pietermaritzburg, 1999), p.66.

⁵⁷ Steve Biko, *I write what I like* (Johannesburg, 2004), p.52.

⁵⁸ Steve Biko, *I write what I like* (Johannesburg, 2004), p.52.

In the tertiary education sector, the system of Bantu Education was codified through the Extension of Universities Act of 1959. The Extension of Universities Act enabled the Minister of Bantu Education to “provide for the establishment, maintenance and control of university colleges for non-white persons; for the admission of students to and their instruction at university colleges; for their limitation of the admission of non-white universities to certain university institutions; and for other incidental matters”.⁵⁹ This restricted black African, ‘coloured’, and Indian students to five historically black universities (HBUs) which were affiliated to the University of South Africa (UNISA). Students could only attend, with legal permission, universities designated for white students if their course was not offered at an HBU. HBUs were established to reinforce the policies of separate development. In the 1970s, students in the secondary and tertiary sector began to challenge heightened state repression through nationwide protests. Despite the claim that HBUs had autonomy, the Extension of Universities Act stated that HBUs would have to consult with the minister on the curricula, the holding of examinations and the awarding of diplomas.⁶⁰ The education minister would consult with the finance minister on the financial administration of universities, which allowed the state to control the university.⁶¹ This meant that the university’s autonomy would be limited through financial control. This policy demonstrates the reinforcement of infrastructural mechanisms which controlled HBUs, despite the claim that they allowed for separate development. This issue would be highlighted at the University of the North, Turfloop.

The University of the North, Turfloop, was established in 1960 under the Extension of Universities Act. This university was an example of an HBU of politically active staff and students who challenged the notion of the entrenchment of apartheid within the university. In 1972, boycotts against the university grew as the relationship between the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO) and the SRC strengthened.⁶² A split between staff occurred when the Black Academic Staff Association (BASA) was formed, which resulted in the formation of a subsequent white staff association. One staff member, Mr GM Nkondo, who was a member of BASA recalled discrimination and heightened racial tensions within the

⁵⁹ Saleem Badat, *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and Apartheid: from SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*, (Pretoria, 1990), p.50.

⁶⁰ The Extension of Universities Act of 1959, p.499, Accessed from <http://disa.ukzn.ac.za/leg19590619028020045>.

⁶¹ The Extension of Universities Act of 1959, p.508, Accessed from <http://disa.ukzn.ac.za/leg19590619028020045>.

⁶² Anne Heffernan, “Black Consciousness’s Lost Leader: Abraham Tiro, The University of the North, and the Seeds of South Africa’s Student Movement in the 1970s”, *Journal of South African Studies*, 41, 1, 2015, p.173.

faculty.⁶³ The SRC had supported the formation of BASA and stated that if the university “belonged to the blacks it had to bear the stamp of black authority”.⁶⁴ This demonstrated the fact that under black consciousness, staff and students wanted independence from state control and white administrators; however, the state and white administration held control over the curriculum and activities of the institution. This would lead to protests at Turfloop.

In 1972, a protest occurred at a graduation ceremony at Turfloop which resulted from a speech given by student and activist, Abraham Tiro.⁶⁵ He spoke on the issue of Bantu Education and the discrimination of black African students at Turfloop. Tiro was expelled as a result of the speech, which ignited racial tensions between staff. Black African staff felt that it was unfair to expel Tiro and staged a walkout as a form of protest. Students were angered by the outcome, boycotted lectures and mobilised under SASO. All students at Turfloop were expelled by the university and the white staff association supported the expulsion. Students were told that they would have to reapply for admission to the university. The remaining students responded by mobilising and supporting the expelled students. Tiro’s speech had an important effect on students, which resulted in mobilisations on other campuses and influenced protests by school children.⁶⁶ Tiro and other politically active students, such as Cyril Ramaphosa and Lybon Mbasu, were later employed as teachers at Isaac Morrison High School in Soweto. They continued to inspire the youth to resist the oppressive state. Many of these students were subsequently involved in the Soweto Uprising.

The Soweto Uprising

On 16 June 1976, students began to gather across Soweto. Signs outside schools read, “No SBs allowed. Enter at your own risk”.⁶⁷ “SBs” were the Special Branch which consisted of police and informants for the state. Students had organised a boycott to show solidarity throughout the community against the implementation of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction at schools. The students protested from various areas of Soweto towards the Orlando Stadium.⁶⁸ Students were met with police resistance. This angered the students, who began to throw stones at the police, and the police responded by firing live ammunition into the crowd, killing Hector

⁶³ GM Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony Dilemma of a Black University in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1976), p.4.

⁶⁴ GM Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony Dilemma of a Black University in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1976), p.4.

⁶⁵ Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien, *Students must Rise: Youth Struggle in South Africa Before and Beyond Soweto '76* (Johannesburg, 2016), p.49.

⁶⁶ Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien, *Students must Rise: Youth Struggle in South Africa Before and Beyond Soweto '76* (Johannesburg, 2016), p.49.

⁶⁷ Helena Pohlandt- McCormick, “I Saw a Nightmare” (Columbia, 2006), p.2.

⁶⁸ Helena Pohlandt- McCormick, “I Saw a Nightmare” (Columbia, 2006), p.2.

Pieterse and many other students. The death estimates were 1200 fatalities, but the apartheid state claimed that there were only 176 fatalities. The following day further protests took place in Alexandra, a township north of Johannesburg. Subsequently, students at the University of Witwatersrand mobilised against the police atrocities towards the students in Soweto. Despite the nationwide horror of the events of Soweto and further protests, these national protests did not ignite protests at Rhodes University in 1976. These events of Turfloop and Soweto demonstrate the growing resistance against the apartheid state by students in the 1970s and would also emerge at Rhodes University. Due to the limited enrolments of black African, 'coloured' and Indian students at Rhodes University in the 1970s, student protests were limited in comparison to other institutions. Protests were dominated by white students, however most of the student body remained complacent. The next section will discuss Rhodes University, a historically white university that experienced little protest in the 1970s, reflecting its conservatism and alignment with the apartheid system.

Rhodes University in the 1970s

In the 1970s, Rhodes University had a predominantly white staff and student body. There were 2200 students in 1976, and only four students were black African, two were Indian and one student was 'coloured'. This represented 0.31% of the student body. These students could study courses at Rhodes University because their degree was not offered at any of the HBUs, and their access to Rhodes was approved by the Minister of Education. In 1976, Dr Derrick Henderson became the Vice-Chancellor, continuing an era of conservative leadership and referring to himself as an "old school liberal". Henderson's claim to be a "old school liberal" reflected a juxtaposition of many white individuals who claimed to be in favour of change, however, their actions were not radical in challenging the racist status quo, as there was fear of state repercussions.

Dr Henderson allowed black African, Indian and 'coloured' students to enrol at Rhodes University; however, segregated residences remained prevalent. An old nurse's infirmary was used as a residence for black African, 'coloured' and Indian students.⁶⁹ Despite permitting students to attend the university, Henderson's conservatism presented itself through segregated residences and demonstrated that he adhered to the state's policy of separate development. It was actions such as these that highlighted the issue with the lack of radical action against the

⁶⁹ Shaun Anthony Greyling, "Rhodes University during the Segregation and Apartheid Eras", Master of Arts, Rhodes University, 2007.p.129.

state by white liberals, as access to education was granted for these black students; however, integration was not permitted. In a *Rhodeo* interview, Dr Henderson answered some questions on the political positioning of the university. He was asked what the “political leaning” of the campus was, and he responded, “Rhodes is certainly not as radical as the University of Witwatersrand or Cape Town”.⁷⁰ He said there was a “strong liberal representation among students. Possibly the conservative students are more heavily represented”.⁷¹ The interviewer further asked the VC how student attitudes had changed since he had arrived at the university. The VC responded that students “then tended to accept authority more readily” and “NUSAS was a hassle then just as it is today”.⁷² These statements demonstrate his conservative views and desire for students to accept authority and not challenge the institution. His response is indicative of nuanced conservatism through his claim to being liberal whilst criticising NUSAS as an interference of his management and leadership of the university. This demonstrates Henderson’s leaning towards the status quo of a state controlled authoritarian institution.

The university also had few black African, Indian and ‘coloured’ academics, who were referred to as “professional assistants”, despite performing the duties of academic staff.⁷³ Professor Moosa Motara was a lecturer in the Zoology department in 1979, and it clear that the reason the apartheid government did not oppose his appointment was because he had a PhD from a prestigious university in the United States of America.⁷⁴ Apart from the appointment of Motara as a lecturer, few black African academics were employed. Those in academic positions were reduced to assistant positions rather than treated as qualified academic staff. This demonstrates the institutional racism and lack of progressive institutional culture that existed at Rhodes during the 1970s and reflects how the idea of a ‘liberal’ university was an attempt to conceal the reality of a segregated institution. In addition, it was noted that student politics also hindered progressive change, which was evident through the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). NUSAS was a multiracial organisation that promoted close communication and affiliation with SRCs in South Africa. Despite NUSAS identifying as a multi-racial organisation, it is important to note the walkout by Steve Biko at the NUSAS conference held at Rhodes University in 1967. The walk out was in response to the issue of white leadership dominating struggle politics. Biko formed the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO),

⁷⁰ Unknown author, “Rhodeo interviews Dr Henderson”, *Rhodeo*, 30, 6, 1976.

⁷¹ Unknown author, “Rhodeo interviews Dr Henderson”, *Rhodeo*, 30, 6, 1976.

⁷² Unknown author, “Rhodeo interviews Dr Henderson”, *Rhodeo*, 30, 6, 1976.

⁷³ Shaun Anthony Greyling, “Rhodes University during the Segregation and Apartheid Eras”, Master of Arts, Rhodes University, 2007. p.129.

⁷⁴ Interview with academic staff member in 1970s, 16 August, 2019.

whose objectives were to “crystallise the needs and aspirations of the non-white students and seek to make known their grievances” and establish a cohesive identity amongst its members.⁷⁵ NUSAS faced its own internal issues with its place in the struggle and the lack of cohesive identity.⁷⁶ The issue with multiracial organisations, such as NUSAS, is that they believed the liberation of black African people could be achieved through multiracialism. This ideology, however, was problematic, as white people would assume positions of leadership in NUSAS at historically white institutions, which gave little opportunity for black African people to lead the struggle. According to black consciousness ideologies, white people should not have occupied leadership positions within protest movements, as they occupy a privileged position in society and cannot empathise with the oppressions that black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian people faced.⁷⁷ Biko stated that NUSAS had often tried to speak on behalf of the HBUs, which detracted from their own independence in student politics.⁷⁸ This is indicative of Biko’s issue with NUSAS and therefore demonstrates the need for SASO. The need for black consciousness was demonstrated through a discussion by Richard Turner who was a mediator between NUSAS and SASO. He stated that “as a group, white opponents of apartheid are not a significant political force and are certainly not going to be the chief agent in the overthrow of apartheid. It would therefore be wrong for blacks to orient their political activity towards an appeal to whites to help them”.⁷⁹ This statement demonstrates the need for independent black-only organisations to function separately from futile multiracial politics. At Rhodes University, the SRC worked closely with NUSAS, perpetuating conservative politics within the university by reinforcing the dominance of white interests in student politics, which would later result in the establishment of the Black Students’ Movement in the 1980s (discussed in Chapter 2). In the early 1970s, there were tensions between NUSAS and SRCs across universities in South Africa, as NUSAS believed that the SRCs had not effectively fulfilled their duties to recruit members and increase NUSAS presence on campuses.⁸⁰ One issue that some SRCs experienced with NUSAS was the lack of organisational structure and the effectiveness of its meetings. Both the SRC and NUSAS experienced a disjuncture in their expectation of duties by one another and this caused tensions in meetings which is evident in the minutes. One of the main issues that was discussed in the meetings was the issue of spending too much time on

⁷⁵ Steve Biko, *I write what I like*, (Johannesburg, 2004), p.4.

⁷⁶ Steve Biko, *I write what I like*, (Johannesburg, 2004), p.3.

⁷⁷ Steve Biko, *I write what I like* (Johannesburg, 2004), p.3.

⁷⁸ Steve Biko, *I write what I like* (Johannesburg, 2004), p.3.

⁷⁹ E Webster and R Turner, “Dissent” in NUSAS Newsletter, 1974, accessed from

https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/sites/default/files/pdf_files/rejul72.8.pdf.

⁸⁰ Records of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), Accessed from Cory Library C5.

policy documents such as their Congress Draft. It was noted that the Rhodes University SRC was critical of the amount of time spent on writing a document as opposed to active participation in the struggle against apartheid. Rhodes later disaffiliated from NUSAS due to cohesion issues and much of the Rhodes student body being conservative or not involved in student politics.

Student complacency was another factor that contributed to the lack of cohesiveness. This was demonstrated through the lack of attendance of student meetings. The poor attendance resulted in an angered statement in a *Rhodeo* article by the SRC expressing disapproval of students' lack of involvement in student-based issues.⁸¹ This incident demonstrates the lack of students' engagement with their SRC and the issues that they faced and only a small percentage of the student body attended the meeting. Further complacency at Rhodes can be demonstrated through staff responses to protest on campus, such as Professor Henry Higgins, a lecturer from the Sociology Department at the time. He believed that student protests were done with the intention of a "collective ego trip" and that the disruption of the academic programme was "unacademic" and "should not be tolerated by serious academics".⁸² This statement reflects the conservative presence amongst staff and leadership at the university, who believed that the university should be isolated from the issue of apartheid and distanced themselves from politics as it threatened their privilege. Complacency was also evident in the actions of the SRC who failed to transform their own leadership and challenge university structures and the apartheid system.

The SRC failed to transform its own leadership in the 1970s. It consisted of white men and women who were affiliated to NUSAS. The SRC demanded that the constitution of South Africa be inclusive of all South Africans, and that all citizens should have the right to vote. This demonstrates the issue that organisations such as SASO found with white 'liberal' organisations at the time. It promoted equality and claimed to be anti-racist; however, few were willing to give up their privileges and status within white-led student organisations.⁸³ In the 1970s the SRC was not pressured to actively promote projects that dealt with the issues faced by black African students on campus. The SRC tended to acknowledge the current national political issues at the time but failed to represent all students on campus. In contrast, SASO represented black African, 'coloured' and Indian students under apartheid. SASO membership

⁸¹ Unknown author, "Student Awareness" in *Rhodeo*, April 1976, p.7.

⁸² Monty Roodt, "Rhodes University: From Apartheid Vastrap to African Swing", *African Sociological Review*, 9, 1, 2005, p.237.

⁸³ Steve Biko, *I write what I like* (Johannesburg, 2004), p.7.

at Rhodes would have been limited as there were few black African enrolments. This resulted in their voice remaining suppressed until the 1980s, with the emergence of the BSM.

The ineffectiveness of the SRC was demonstrated in a 1971 address by the SRC president at the time, Kathy Satchwell. She stated “should we engage in student action and protest, it should always be responsible”.⁸⁴ In this statement Satchwell is not against protest action; however, the plea for responsible protest demonstrates a hesitancy of the SRC to address the apartheid state aggressively, and thus reflects that the SRC remained ineffective despite its demand for the end of apartheid.

The complacency of the SRC, which was an extension of NUSAS, is also demonstrated through a further statement by Satchwell. She stated, “in our youthful arrogance we knew that apartheid was wrong because it denied black people the vote and the opportunity to fully participate in South African society. We were firmly opposed to detention without trial and deplored deaths in detention. However, we did not articulate any vision for a new society”.⁸⁵ This demonstrates the attitude of many ‘liberal’ students at the time: while stating that apartheid was wrong, little action resulted from their statements to end apartheid in SRC meetings. In numerous SRC meetings, the end of apartheid was called for; however, little engagement and mobilisation was implemented.

The SRC’s disaffiliation from NUSAS was also successful because the white student body supported the campaign led by the South African Federation of English Students under the leadership of Izak Smuts.⁸⁶ This was a conservative group on campus who believed NUSAS had not “honestly” recruited its members and believed that individual membership rather than centre membership was necessary. The Federation wanted to promote closer communication between English and Afrikaans universities, which would allow the spread of anti-NUSAS ideologies.⁸⁷ The communication between English and Afrikaans universities would allow for conservatism to continue to be legitimised by white students within their respective campuses. Additionally, they believed that members of NUSAS were used as “cannon fodder” in the “government versus NUSAS struggle”.⁸⁸ NUSAS ideologies were considered to be anti-racist,

⁸⁴ Kathleen Satchwell, “Students at Rhodes under Apartheid”, *African Sociological Review*, 9, 1, 2004, p.172.

⁸⁵ Kathleen Satchwell, “Students at Rhodes under Apartheid”, *African Sociological Review*, 9, 1, 2004, p.172.

⁸⁶ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An intellectual, political and cultural History*, (Grahamstown, 2017), p.208.

⁸⁷ Unknown author, *Campus Independent: A student newspaper*, March 1976, Accessed from Cory Library C5.

⁸⁸ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An intellectual, political and cultural History*, (Grahamstown, 2017), p.208.

anti-apartheid and 'liberal'. The Federation wanted the "centre membership" link to NUSAS to be severed at Rhodes allowing sustained white leadership.⁸⁹

In early February of 1976, NUSAS met in Cape Town, as its image was at stake as many people were incredibly critical of the organisation. There were distinct divisions within the organisation, and it split into "three groups". These groups were described as "Left-Wing", "centre" and "Right Wing".⁹⁰ This demonstrated the lack of cohesive identity within NUSAS's politics. The lack of cohesiveness did not aid struggle politics and led to ineffective actions by the organisation. If HBUs remained affiliated to NUSAS, their role in the struggle would have been reduced by the internal white politics and lack of unity.⁹¹ Some universities such as Rhodes disaffiliated from NUSAS due to lack of student support.⁹² Certain members of the student body wanted to regain membership to NUSAS and were involved in a reaffiliation campaign.⁹³ The reaffiliation campaign was launched on campus with the objective of re-establishing Rhodes' NUSAS membership at a national level.

Monty Roodt, who was a student in the 1970s, and was involved with the NUSAS pro-affiliation campaign, said there was ignorance amongst students voting in the NUSAS referendum. Roodt referred to a survey that was held by the Journalism Department post-disaffiliation from NUSAS to "measure the level of information" students had on the organisation. This survey revealed that 68% of the participants were "ill informed".⁹⁴ The dominant perception of NUSAS was perceived by conservative students as a "terrorist" organisation due to their anti-apartheid sentiments. This demonstrates that the vote by students was motivated by social pressures rather than informed decisions.⁹⁵ Due to the apathy of most students during the 1970s, many chose to participate in non-political student organisations such as Rag.

⁸⁹ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An intellectual, political and cultural History*, (Grahamstown, 2017), p.208.

⁹⁰ Unknown author, "NUSAS Congress" in *Rhodeo*, 30,1,1976. p.3.

⁹¹ Steve Biko, *I write what I like* (Johannesburg,2004), p.7.

⁹² Monty Roodt, "Rhodes University From Apartheid Vastrap to African Swing", *African sociological Review*,9, 1, 2005, p.236.

⁹³ Monty Roodt, "Rhodes University From Apartheid Vastrap to African Swing", *African sociological Review*,9, 1, 2005, p.236.

⁹⁴ Monty Roodt, "Rhodes University From Apartheid Vastrap to African Swing", *African sociological Review*,9, 1, 2005, p.236.

⁹⁵ Monty Roodt, "Rhodes University From Apartheid Vastrap to African Swing", *African sociological Review*, 9, 1, 2005, p.236.

Student complacency and a lack of interest of political issues manifested itself through the student organisation, Rag.⁹⁶ Rag was an initiative which sought to fundraise for charity; however, sexism was evident within the organisation. Students often occupied themselves with Rag events, which were filled with drinking and ‘partying’. In an interview with Alan Kirkaldy, he recalls the sexism in Rag when he reflects on the “Athies auction”.⁹⁷ The auctioning process entailed first year women being ‘sold’ to the highest bidder. After the women were sold, they would have to go on an excursion with the winner. The proceeds of this auction would be donated to charity.⁹⁸ This behaviour persisted in the 1980s and Rag was officially removed due to its problematic nature in later years, for instance its damage to university property and its sexist activities that exploited women such as the Miss Fresher pageants. Miss Fresher pageants were an initiative by Rag to raise funds for charity.⁹⁹ Students would vote for a queen and two princesses who would be paraded in a rag procession which consisted of decorative floats. These floats would represent the different residences and the leading float would have the rag queen and her two princesses seated on the float.¹⁰⁰ The floats that were paraded through town were judged based on aesthetic appearance at the end of the parade.¹⁰¹ These parades were led by drum majorettes as well as men dressed in drag who made fun of the majorettes. These events are reflective of the sexist attitude within Rag. It was only in the 1980s that the pageant winners were selected based on charity work and character rather than the physical appearances.¹⁰²

Protest at Rhodes University remained limited in the 1970s due to the largely conservative staff and student body. In the late 1970s, protest became more frequent where students who claimed to be “liberal” and not from specific affiliations decided to organise protests on campus. The next section will discuss the protests that occurred at Rhodes University.

Student Protest at Rhodes University

In 1977, Steve Biko was arrested and detained outside Grahamstown. He later died in detention due to police brutality. Students throughout South Africa mobilised against the atrocity of Biko’s death. At Rhodes University, only a few students were involved in protests against

⁹⁶ Rag Drag, “An alternative view”, *Rhodeo*, 1979, p.10

⁹⁷ “Athies” is an abbreviation for Atherstone House which is a women’s residence on Rhodes campus.

⁹⁸ Interview with Alan Kirkaldy, 13 August 2018

⁹⁹ Interview with participant who was a student at Rhodes in the 1970s, 18 August 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Unknown author, “Sizzle Jonn Sez” in *Rhodeo*, 30 March 1976.

¹⁰¹ Unknown author, “Carrot for a Queen” in *Rhodeo*, 3 October 1974.

¹⁰² Unknown author, “Sizzle Jonn Sez” in *Rhodeo*, 30 March 1976.

Biko's death. During the Biko memorial protest, some students marched from the Drostdy Arch on campus to the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. George in town. Alan Kirkaldy recalls his participation in the protest. Kirkaldy stated that, "(w)ith the Steve Biko thing we walked one by one as anything over one person was declared an illegal gathering".¹⁰³ A wreath was carried in honour of Steve Biko and was taken by one student to a halfway point who would then hand it over to someone at the cathedral and then walk back to campus. The protest took various forms across the country and was organised by James Mulder, an Anglican priest who resided in Grahamstown. Kirkaldy stated that he became politicised after Biko's death and that "Biko's death was a case of you needed to make a choice. You can't pretend you can't see it".¹⁰⁴ Students such as Kirkaldy were outraged by the death of Biko and the unfair detentions against those who opposed the state. Students continued the protest through a hunger strike. Monty Roodt recalls his participation in the hunger strike. He stated "(o)ne of the things I remember is that a whole lot of people went on a hunger strike in solidarity because they had claimed he had died by starving himself and we wanted to show a symbolic thing that you can't die from not eating for a week".¹⁰⁵ His statement demonstrates that some individuals at Rhodes became more politically aware and actively drew attention to horrific events experienced in the national and local climate. Despite students such as Roodt and Kirkaldy participating in these protests surrounding the death of Biko, many students remained complacent and were not involved in protests. *Rhodeo* did not cover these protests as the editors at the time were not radical in the articles they produced.¹⁰⁶ In the 1980s the editorship of the newspaper would change to Shaun Johnson and Craig Tyson who actively challenged the university and the state in their content published. These protests, despite being poorly attended, were significant in that they ignited resistance at the university, and further inspired protests the following year.

The Quad Squat

In 1979, the Quad Squat was a protest sparked by students who wanted to draw attention to the forced removals of the Glenmore community, a township near Pedi in the Ciskei. These students believed that they had been 'conscientized,' which meant that they were politically awakened and wanted to make a difference in the university, which isolated itself from

¹⁰³ Interview with Alan Kirkaldy, 6 September, 2019

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Alan Kirkaldy, 6 September, 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Monty Roodt, 15 September 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Alan Kirkaldy, 6 September 2019.

community politics.¹⁰⁷ Kirkaldy stated that prior to this protest, he went to a variety of departments and encouraged students and staff to participate. On the day of the protest, the protestors set up a “squatter camp” to replicate the conditions faced by communities who experienced forced removals. The camp was set up around the fountain outside the main administration building. The students and some staff who were from humanities subjects, such as Sociology and History, facilitated discussions on the topic of “Africanising the curriculum”.¹⁰⁸

The protestors argued that the university’s curriculum was problematic in an African context as it valued colonialism. They believed that the curriculum needed to be inclusive of material that was relevant to South Africans. Students handed out pamphlets about the need for curriculum change; however, in a later survey by the Journalism Department of the time, it was discovered that most students were apathetic towards community issues and one student did not know that Glenmore was a settlement camp.¹⁰⁹ Roodt stated that “we wanted to bring the outside community inside (the university)”.¹¹⁰

The protest received some backlash by conservative staff. In classes, some black African students were “forcibly dragged out and arrested” as it was believed by the state that these students were either involved in the protests or were political instigators, which resulted in their arrest. Posters that highlighted these issues were torn down by the administration of the university, which had not shown solidarity with the protest. Dr Henderson had not prevented the protest; however, he was not in favour of it, unlike some academics in the Humanities who had shown support for the protestors. The lack of action by the university demonstrates their complicity with apartheid. The university also failed to show solidarity with the students’ protests around the Glenmore community.

The protestors were met with conservative backlash during the protest. Conservative students threatened to destroy the “camp” that was set up in the quad and threw water balloons at the protestors. The following day, a “counter demonstration” was held that was “in support of colonialism”.¹¹¹ This was done by mocking the protestors through the presence of “black

¹⁰⁷ Paolo Freire and Myra Bergman Ramos, “Chapter 2 from Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, *Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 2, 2, *Race and Secondary Education: Content, Contexts, Impacts*, 2009, p.163.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Monty Roodt, 15 September, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Monty Roodt, “From Vastrap to African Swing”, *African Sociological Review*, 9, 1, 2005, p.236.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Monty Roodt, 15 September, 2017.

¹¹¹ Unknown author, “Squat in, Rhodes Revives Protest”, in *Rhodeo*, 25 May 1979.

servants, cigars, bashers¹¹², blazers and bowls” to oppose the squat-in.¹¹³ These students wanted to reinforce colonialism through symbolic protest. As a consequence, a meeting was held by lecturers who were in favour of the squat-in.¹¹⁴ According to Roodt, the racist “right-wingers” had stated problematic remarks such as “why don’t they keep their townships clean”, which were met by liberal lecturers such as Professor Jeff Peires who stated “because they’re too busy cleaning your fucking house”.¹¹⁵ Professor Andre Brink, who was initially the head of the Afrikaans and Netherlands Department at Rhodes University, had argued that the protest had been seen as more of a “gesture” than an actual act towards change.¹¹⁶ Roodt remarked that Brink may have provided valid commentary; however, he notes that many protestors had since left South Africa and were now living abroad. Both Roodt and Strelitz remained at Rhodes. Roodt remarks that if Brink had seen their persistence to stay at the university, the protest would now be considered an “act”.¹¹⁷ This is perhaps a reflection within the contemporary period of whether their protest made an impact on politics in South Africa during that time. This suggests that Roodt sees their persistence at the university through lecturing and academia as a medium for continuing their transformative ideas in a tertiary environment that is still largely based on a colonial model of tertiary education. Recently the issue of transformation and decolonisation was highlighted through the #FEESMUSTFALL protests (discussed in the conclusion).

Amongst white liberal students, ideological differences were prevalent. Larry Strelitz stated in an interview in 2017 that white students at the time were “conscientizing” and were influenced by scholars such as Paulo Freire who wrote *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The book was a banned work in South Africa, because it presented ideologies intended to uplift the oppressed.¹¹⁸ It presented the notion that the oppressed could regain their humanity and liberation; however, this could only be achieved if the struggle was led by the oppressed. This

¹¹² Bashers are a semi-formal straw hat, and bowls is a sport whereby a bias weighted ball is rolled towards a marker known as a jack.

¹¹³ Unknown author, “Squat in, Rhodes Revives Protest”, in *Rhodeo*, 25 May 1979, Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

¹¹⁴ Unknown author, “Squat in, Rhodes Revives Protest”, in *Rhodeo*, 25 May 1979, Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

¹¹⁵ Unknown author, “Squat in, Rhodes Revives Protest”, in *Rhodeo*, 25 May 1979, Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

¹¹⁶ Unknown author, “Squat in, Rhodes Revives Protest”, in *Rhodeo*, 25 May 1979, Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

¹¹⁷ Unknown author, “Squat in, Rhodes Revives Protest”, in *Rhodeo*, 25 May 1979, Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

¹¹⁸ Paulo Freire and Myra Bergman Ramos, “Chapter 2 from Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, *Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 2, 2, *Race and Secondary Education: Content, Contexts, Impacts*, 2009, p.163.

also resonated with the ideologies of black consciousness. “There was another group of us although we were sympathetic to the political aims, we were influenced by the American counterculture movements and trying to expand your mind through drugs and so on and that whole scene”. Strelitz stated that he had been taught by “some inspirational lecturers”.¹¹⁹ The course material also conscientized the students as Strelitz stated “(w)ith her we were doing things like Paulo Freire and radical education, understandings and writings and then we had a lecturer called Marianne Roux who did industrial sociology and political sociology course with us. And so really what inspired us was a sense that we had this very isolated university amidst this sea of poverty and the context of particular political arrangements under apartheid”. He expressed the view that he and his peers had felt that it was problematic that students could “live in this isolated island in the township”.¹²⁰

In this period, students and academics with diverse backgrounds and experiences began to openly express contempt against the apartheid state and the detentions of political leaders. The interviewed students of this period also acknowledged their overconfidence in attempting to facilitate change and the limitations on their own agency. Roodt stated that students were “incredibly egotistical and overconfident, and we believed we could change the world”.¹²¹ He added that students also felt they had a sense of agency through the “Africanisation” campaign with the hopes of people staying in South Africa and not emigrating. Students also wanted to Africanise the curriculum. The objective of Africanisation was to reform the curriculum to focus on assisting the community. Supporters of Africanisation believed that colonial education favoured commerce with a “profit motive”.¹²² Students also felt a sense of agency through helping communities that were forcibly removed to Glenmore. Student movements had given students a space to experience agency and assert their own political identity; however, this was attributed to their existing white privilege. As a result of their white privilege, few arrests were made of white protesting students. Due to protest being illegal in the 1970s, there would have been limitations on the achievement of agency through protest especially for black African students. Black African students would have been arrested if they participated in protests. They were permitted to study at historically white institutions such as Rhodes, yet they were under the state’s scrutiny and were aware of the consequences if they participated in protests, as the state would arrest them and withdraw their registration from the university.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Professor Larry Strelitz, 26 September, 2017.

¹²⁰ Interview with Professor Larry Strelitz, 26 September, 2017.

¹²¹ Interview with Professor Monty Roodt, 23 August 2018.

¹²² “Speakout” in *Rhodeo*, 6 May 1979.

Despite some students feeling they had agency, white students who were more involved in anti-apartheid politics or were known by their peers to be 'liberal' often experienced verbal abuse by their conservative peers. Professor Kirkaldy recalls an abusive encounter where a conservative student spat on him. Monty Roodt experienced harassment when he would go to the Victoria Hotel, which was a known pub in Grahamstown. He stated in a previous interview he had his long hair pulled because he was known for having worked with NUSAS and being 'liberal'.¹²³ Despite white students possessing more privilege than black African students, they were met with abuse from conservative peers. This abuse differed from that of black African students who were arrested by the state if they were deemed politically active or a perceived threat to the state. Conservative white students at the time were able to express some of their conservative and racist views because of what was socially accepted in the context of apartheid South Africa.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed Rhodes University which was complacent in the apartheid struggle during the 1970s. The university was under conservative leadership and its predominantly white student body remained complicit with the politics of that time. Consequently, the impact of protests was diluted by the lack of politically active students and the low numbers of black African, 'coloured' and Indian enrolments. This diminished the impact of potential activism on campus. The SRC, which was affiliated to NUSAS, lacked a cohesive identity surrounding its politics and little activity towards meaningful change was conducted. The issue of affiliation remained contentious, and black African students broke away from NUSAS under SASO and black consciousness ideology. This resulted in a lack of cohesion amongst the student body which overshadowed the issues that black African, 'coloured' and Indian students highlighted. White 'liberal' efforts were problematic as it stripped black African people of their agency in struggle politics. Political activities were futile, as they were white dominated and lacked deep commitment to change. Rhodes University would remain conservative throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It was only in the 1980s that black African students sought to create representation for themselves and oppose the colonial ethos of the university under the Black Students' Movement.

¹²³ Interview with Monty Roodt, 23 August, 2018.

Chapter 2: “Until the People Govern”¹²⁴: The Black Student’s Movement at Rhodes University in the 1980s.

Introduction

In the 1980s, student protests escalated at universities due to the general growth of anti-apartheid activism. Increased apartheid dictatorship exacerbated political ferment. Notable in this period was the formation of many civic and grassroots organisations including the United Democratic Front (UDF). Apart from the already existing Student Representative Councils (SRCs), other organisations such as the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the Black Students’ Movement (BSM), used meetings and protests as means to communicate the need for change in South Africa. Initially the SRC was able to retain an exclusively white leadership due to the low enrolments of black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian students. This chapter focuses on the emergence and significance of the BSM at Rhodes University. It argues that the BSM emerged as a radical organisation due to the lack of representation for black students on campus, particularly because of the generally conservative political disposition of the SRC. Apart from its general whiteness and conservatism, the SRC leaders were divided due to internal politics which led to the neglect of black students’ issues. Furthermore, the BSM challenged black students’ lack of access to education both nationally and at Rhodes University by criticising the permit system and calling attention to the lack of financial support for black students. The BSM was also significant as its demands and protests impacted on the university’s policies. It gained legitimacy with the university Senate who oversaw the overall functioning of the university and thus the demands of black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian students were addressed.

Broader social and political context of South Africa and Rhodes in the 1980s

The 1980s was a complex and turbulent era in South African history due to the partial reforms that the apartheid government implemented while simultaneously repressing any opposition. A set of proposals had been drafted by the National Party (NP) aimed at “co-opting coloured and Indian communities” into the system, which essentially remained under white minority rule.¹²⁵ It granted limited voting rights to Indians, and ‘coloureds’, while the Bantustans would

¹²⁴ Statement on Graduation by Black Students Movement Projects Committee/Communication, April 1987. Accessed from Cory Library: C5.

¹²⁵ T.R.H. Davenport & Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (South Africa, 2000), p.496.

be on a “confederal relationship” with the state. The NP had further stated that the system of democracy would not be viable in the “foreseeable future”.¹²⁶ The apartheid government wanted to hold a referendum on 2 November 1980 to measure voters’ opinion of the Tricameral Parliament. The Tricameral Parliament would enable the National Party to co-opt ‘coloured’ and Indian people into the governance system, while retaining the Bantustan system. Two-thirds of the white vote was in favour of a new constitution. Consequently, a House of Assembly was established for white, ‘coloured’ and Indian citizens, which were all on separate “ethnic voters’ rolls”.¹²⁷ The Tricameral Parliament and the 1984 constitution gave limited power to black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian South Africans, hence the formation of the UDF in 1984 and the civil resistance that would follow.

Civil protest in the 1980s and the United Democratic Front

The UDF was formed as a resistance based organisation which opposed the Tricameral Parliament and was established to address the “exclusions of Africans from the Tricameral Parliament”.¹²⁸ They created momentum for opposition which resulted in “by-elections following in the wake of the constitutional reforms”.¹²⁹ The UDF became a national force which “articulated local township grievances into a broader anti-apartheid discourse,”¹³⁰ and was created as an opposition to the National Party government’s constitution of 1984.¹³¹ Membership at national level consisted of young individuals who had left school and some were members of political organisations.¹³² They opposed the Tricameral Parliament in favour of a fair and democratic system representative of all citizens. The UDF consisted of a “coalition” of students, workers, women’s and church societies, and civic organisations.¹³³ They favoured the armed struggle, socialism and the ANC’s “claim to leadership”.¹³⁴ The UDF’s main objectives were to “mobilise South Africans with the aim of a non-sexist, non-racial democratic South Africa. They used grassroots organisations to uplift communities and to mobilise people in protest against the oppressive state”.¹³⁵ Their secondary objectives were

¹²⁶ T.R.H. Davenport & Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (South Africa, 2000), p.496.

¹²⁷ T.R.H. Davenport & Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (South Africa, 2000), p.496.

¹²⁸ Aletta J. Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London, 1996), p.238.

¹²⁹ Aletta J. Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London, 1996), p.238.

¹³⁰ Aletta J. Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London,1996), p.238.

¹³¹ Tom Lodge & Bill Nasson, “The origins of the United Democratic Front” in *All Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (New York, 1991), p.34.

¹³² Tom Lodge & Bill Nasson, “The origins of the United Democratic Front” in *All Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (New York, 1991), p.34.

¹³³ Tom Lodge & Bill Nasson, “The origins of the United Democratic Front”, p.34.

¹³⁴ Tom Lodge & Bill Nasson, “The origins of the United Democratic Front”, p.34.

¹³⁵ Tom Lodge & Bill Nasson, “The origins of the United Democratic Front”, p.34.

to “overthrow black local leadership”, expel and “sometimes assassinate” the “collaborators with the white government”, instigate consumer boycotts, and implement the institution of “people’s power” programmes. The community programmes were designed to replace the state “agencies in education, justice and municipal administration” which would enable the people to govern.¹³⁶ Some of its key members included Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak and Albertina Sisulu. The UDF became influential across South Africa at national and regional levels. In some cities like Port Elizabeth, it mobilised rapidly.¹³⁷

The youth in the Eastern Cape identified with the principles of the UDF and hoped for revolutionary change in South Africa.¹³⁸ Additionally, schools and universities were involved in anti-apartheid boycotts and civilian protests, which usually took place under the auspices of the UDF. The government responded to increased protests by further violating civilians. In Langa township, on the outskirts of Uitenhage, protestors mobilised on the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, and were met with violence which resulted in 69 deaths. After the Uitenhage massacre, civil protests escalated even further.¹³⁹ The government implemented “Total Strategy” as a mechanism to counter the “total onslaught” by anti-apartheid civic organisations.¹⁴⁰ Bridgit Hilton Barber, a student in the 1980s at Rhodes University, reflected on the significance of the UDF within the local Grahamstown community. She stated that “the UDF had been formed and there were strong union movements in Port Elizabeth and East London. There was also the development of community-based organisations. They were very important. What comes to mind is Cradock. The people who started doing grassroots work in the communities. There was a lot going on around us and the university was trying to steer a difficult ship at that time”.¹⁴¹ At Rhodes University, the UDF’s objectives of non-racialism were represented through various student organisations such as the SRC, NUSAS and BSM. BSM had affiliated closely with the UDF in particular, despite mobilising around collective blackness (which is often associated with the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM)). Moreover, these student organisations were also involved with other civic organisations such as the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), Black Sash, the Grahamstown Youth Organisation (GRACA), and the Grahamstown Civic Organisation (GRACO). These organisations worked together on numerous issues such as providing support for citizens who had been detained

¹³⁶ Tom Lodge & Bill Nasson, “The origins of the United Democratic Front”, p.35.

¹³⁷ Tom Lodge & Bill Nasson, “The origins of the United Democratic Front”, p.40.

¹³⁸ Tom Lodge & Bill Nasson, “The origins of the United Democratic Front”, p.34.

¹³⁹ T.R.H. Davenport & Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (South Africa, 2000), p.507.

¹⁴⁰ TRH Davenport & Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (South Africa,2000), p.460.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Bridgit Hilton Barber, September 2018.

without trial. These organisations within the university and Grahamstown community had also on numerous occasions worked closely with the UDF. The SRC, for example, had attended UDF meetings in Port Elizabeth. These meetings addressed the anti-detainment campaigns, to create awareness and to reject the unfair detentions in South Africa. Some student leaders, on the SRC, NUSAS and BSM, also worked with civic organisations. One participant, a former BSM president, was involved with the UDF before enrolling at Rhodes University and additionally was the treasurer for the Vaal Civic Association (VCA).¹⁴² His broader involvement with the civic organisations were reflected in the BSM's politics.

The UDF also had student affiliates such as the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and NUSAS. At Rhodes University, NUSAS affiliation became a contentious issue on campus which persisted throughout the 1980s with annual debates concerning the necessity of affiliation.¹⁴³ In 1980, elections for NUSAS affiliation were held and according to the SRC minutes, 1051 votes were against the affiliation to NUSAS and 956 were in favour of affiliation.¹⁴⁴ According to a NUSAS publication titled "NUSAS 1980: SASPU National", Rhodes had "failed to affiliate" in May of 1980.¹⁴⁵ Due to the outcome of the votes, Rhodes disaffiliated from NUSAS in 1980. In the SRC President's address, it was stated that the disaffiliation was a "disappointment but encouraging that many people on the SRC support NUSAS".¹⁴⁶

Disaffiliation occurred because NUSAS's politics were perceived as "too radical" for conservative students. These students ironically, thought of themselves as 'liberals',¹⁴⁷ but would subsequently vote in favour of disaffiliation. There were two organisations who campaigned for the disaffiliation from NUSAS. One of the organisations was The Progressive Federal Party (PFP), which was the forerunner of the Democratic Alliance¹⁴⁸. Their membership included staff and students on campus. The Moderate Students Organisation (MSO) also campaigned for the disaffiliation from NUSAS as it favoured the National Party

¹⁴² Interview with participant, a former BSM President in the 1985, 17 August 2019. The VCA was crucial in opposing the black local authorities' election and through the UDF affiliation, which supported mass worker and school boycotts that stretched from the Vaal to the Eastern Cape. Tom Lodge & Bill Nasson, "The origins of the United Democratic Front" in *All Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (New York, 1991), p.66.

¹⁴³ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.211.

¹⁴⁴ SRC minutes, 11 August 1983, Accessed from Cory Library: PR 4616.

¹⁴⁵ "NUSAS:1980", SASPU National, 1980, accessed from Cory Library, C5 NUSAS Minutes.

¹⁴⁶ "NUSAS Presidents Report", 1980, accessed from Cory library, C5 NUSAS Minutes.

¹⁴⁷ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.211.

¹⁴⁸ The PFP was an opposition party to the National Party and later became the Democratic Alliance after 1994.

agenda. The PFP and MSO did not formally collaborate on disaffiliation. The state added further pressures to the disaffiliation from NUSAS through the involvement of informants on campus which is discussed later in the chapter.

During the 1980s, the leadership at Rhodes University remained under Vice-Chancellor Dr. Derek Henderson, and tensions ran high between him and politically active students who disliked his inability to take a political stand. The SRC in the 1980s continued on a trajectory of exclusive white leadership, which meant that it had a limited representation for the increasingly diverse student body. As a result, the Black Students' Movement was formed in April 1983, seeking to create a voice for black students at Rhodes University. The BSM challenged the leadership of the university and the inherent racism that manifested itself in various ways. The next section will critically analyse SRC politics and its limitations at Rhodes University in the 1980s.

SRC politics in the 1980s, disaffiliation and the emergence of the BSM

In 1983 there were 2903 university students at Rhodes University, with only 182 black African students, 116 Indian students and 92 'coloured' students.¹⁴⁹ The Rhodes SRC remained complicit as its representation was exclusively white. Despite having interests in challenging national issues such as apartheid and the unfair detentions of students, the SRC failed to engage in any kind of radical politics. Similarly, it did not address issues such as the financial plight of black students at the institution. The reason for the lack of change was that the SRC was absorbed in its own affairs. For instance, the lack of consensus around affiliation to NUSAS, the infiltration of the SRC by the Security Branch and the internal suspicions amongst students all factored into its inability to address the prevalent student-based issues of that time.¹⁵⁰

Due to the contention surrounding NUSAS affiliation, students who had worked with the security branch added pressure to severing the link between the SRC and NUSAS through participating in a disaffiliation campaign.¹⁵¹ There were various levels of infiltration by informants. These were students that gained information on organisations and individuals and gave this information to the security police. Some informants mentioned that they enjoyed the "excitement" of their role and were remunerated by the security branch for providing

¹⁴⁹ Appendix 'A' in Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017).

¹⁵⁰ Olivia Forsyth, *Agent 407: A South African Breaks her Silence* (Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2015), p.128.

¹⁵¹ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.215.

information.¹⁵² Gordon Brookbanks, who was an informant in the early 1980s, stated that NUSAS was an evident space for infiltration. Notorious Bureau of State Security (BOSS) agents such as Olivia Forsyth infiltrated NUSAS at a national level. Forsyth's role was only to gain information on student organisations by building her credibility amongst her peers in NUSAS. Forsyth was on the Rhodes SRC, which enabled her to gain information on the university and on student politics. This information would be used against anti-apartheid activists who would be arrested and then detained if they were perceived as a threat to national security. She was briefed by BOSS on leftist politics and provided with insight as to which students were considered to be 'liberal'. She dressed like a "hippie" and rode a motorcycle to make herself appear as a legitimate 'leftist'.¹⁵³ Forsyth kept a recording device which was wired into her handbag and had a secret storage space for information in her bedside table.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, Forsyth took politically active friends' keys and gave them to the security police to make copies, so they could "tamper" with these individuals cars and install listening devices.¹⁵⁵ She would give various forms of information to BOSS which included individuals' personal information, their political views and their political activities.¹⁵⁶ Rhodes University was noted in the 1980s as an "anti-government political hotbed", which accounts for the presence of informants and spies present on campus.¹⁵⁷ Lloyd Edwards, a student recruited by his brother to inform on student activities, confirmed that spies worked with the Special Branch and that they infiltrated the SRC and NUSAS during the 1980s.¹⁵⁸ The Special Branch also recruited informants from the student body and staff to provide sensitive information on campus. He also revealed that he worked with Olivia Forsyth.¹⁵⁹ Their involvement as informants in student organisations added to the destabilisation of the SRC and the student body's disaffiliation from NUSAS, confirming that during the 1980s, internal student-based issues were often ignored. Additionally, Edwards stated that he was involved in the establishment of the Moderate Students' Organisation (MSO), and motivated for the disaffiliation campaign because he and his fellow constituents disagreed with the "radical" politics of NUSAS. Edwards noted that these students were not in favour of communism and "socialism", which were often terms used by the apartheid government to produce

¹⁵² Jonathan Ancer, *Betrayal* (Cape Town, 2019), p.162.

¹⁵³ Jonathan Ancer, *Betrayal* (Cape Town, 2019), p.160.

¹⁵⁴ Jonathan Ancer, *Betrayal*, p.162.

¹⁵⁵ Jonathan Ancer, *Betrayal*, p.167.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.163.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.163.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Lloyd Edwards, 5th April, 2019.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Lloyd Edwards, 5th April, 2019.

fearmongering. For instance, the NP claimed that the Soviet Union “attempted to expand its political influence in South Africa in order to obtain control over South Africa’s mineral resources and the country’s strategically-located shipping routes and harbours”.¹⁶⁰ These kind of fabrications on the part of the NP served to keep apartheid ideology in place and are important in understanding the context in which MSO members’ conservative views emerged. Indeed, some of their views were synonymous with the fearmongering that the apartheid state instilled into citizens and soldiers under the Cold War, and during the Border War (1966-1989). Some members of the MSO may have been soldiers in the Border War or had family members who were exposed to indoctrination processes whilst serving as a conscripted soldier prior to their tertiary studies.¹⁶¹ Sentiments of non-racialism, which were driven by NUSAS, were considered a threat to the beliefs by those who had been part of the MSO. There was a lack of synchronisation between the student leadership and NUSAS. Organisations such as the MSO fuelled the rejection of NUSAS on campus. As a result of these factors, the student body lost confidence in the leadership of the SRC. Considering the lack of representation for black students and the above-mentioned lack of confidence in the SRC, a significant new organisation under the Black Students’ Movement was formed to actively give black students a voice on campus.

The BSM was an Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO) affiliated, radical black-only student organisation that consisted of black men and women had organised due to a lack of representation in the SRC and the racism within the university.¹⁶² The BSM was established in 1983 at Rhodes University after numerous submissions of its manifesto to the SRC.¹⁶³ All organisations on campus were required to have the SRC’s and Senate’s approval before establishing themselves on campus. Although the BSM was a radical black organisation, it was in favour of non-racialism and was influenced by UDF leadership. Membership to the BSM was inclusive of ‘coloured’ and Indian students because the choice of the term “black” stemmed from the Black Consciousness Movement. From these meetings often held in the Oppidan Common Room on campus, the 1980s saw numerous protests by the BSM at Rhodes

¹⁶⁰ Jan-ad Stemmet & Burgert A Senekal, “Threats of Communist expansion in Apartheid South Africa: NP claims versus CIA intelligence perspectives in the years 1960 to 1990”, *New Contree*, 68, 2013, p.100.

¹⁶¹ Various interviewees recalled the role of ex-conscripts being part of the MSO. Please see interview with Lloyd Edwards.

¹⁶² “Campus Forces versus Apartheid”, in *Rhodeo*, March 1986.

¹⁶³ SRC minutes Accessed from Cory Library C5, PR4616.

University.¹⁶⁴ The BSM connected with other student and civic organisations which had “subscribed to the (Freedom) Charter”.¹⁶⁵

The Black Students’ Society, which shared similar sentiments to the BSM, was a student organisation established at the University of Witwatersrand and was considered a sister organisation.¹⁶⁶ The BSS was formed in 1977 and was affiliated to SASO. The BSM had some similarities to the BSS, as it created a support base for black students who were oppressed by apartheid. The BSM differed to the BSS in that it was perceived by students as an alternative SRC, unlike the BSS at the University of Witwatersrand which collaborated with its SRC and was less radical in its politics.¹⁶⁷

The BSM was strongly influenced by ideologies of black consciousness and believed in the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Freedom Charter.¹⁶⁸ Some students, according to one BSM member, were not politicised but identified as black and therefore aligned themselves with the organisation.¹⁶⁹ This BSM member did not feel obligated to belong to any political organisation but rather that there was a common goal of “eradicating apartheid”.¹⁷⁰ The BSM had an executive committee that would correspond with the university on issues that they had felt were important. There were various committees, which consisted of an executive committee and sub-committees such as sport, culture and entertainment, finance and media. These sub-committees would organise social events and meetings similarly to the SRC. Some of their leaders, such as Thabiso Ratsomo and Ashwin Desai, were connected to broader national movements such as the UDF.¹⁷¹ Their support of the UDF meant that some leaders were not only involved in local issues but also in broader national politics.

The BSM drew attention to local and national issues that black individuals faced under the heightened repression of the apartheid state in the 1980s. It used various methods to do this. An example is their protest around the Uitenhage “massacre” in March 1985.¹⁷² The BSM

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Professor Kirkaldy, 13 August, 2018.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with a participant who was former BSM member in 1984-1985, August 2019. Freedom Charter is a set of core principles by allied organisations including the ANC of what they envisioned in society and its values are rooted in democracy. The charter was officially adopted on June 1955 at the Congress of The People gathering in Kliptown, Soweto. Accessed from: http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/inventories/inv_pdfo/AD1137/AD1137-Ea6-1-001-jpeg.pdf.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with participant A, member of BSM and student 1981-1985, 18 August, 2019.

¹⁶⁷ Mervyn Shear, *Wits: A University Under the Apartheid Era* (Johannesburg, 1996), p.66.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with participant A, member of BSM and student 1981-1985, 18 August 2019.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with participant B, member of BSM and student 1984-1988, 16 August 2019.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with participant B, member of BSM and student 1984-1988, 16 August 2019.

¹⁷¹ Ashwin Desai “When Rhodes met Mandela: History breaks down into images, not into stories”, *African Sociological Review*, 9, 1, 2005, p.217.

¹⁷² “Sharpeville continues” in *Rhodeo*, 1985, p.6.

stormed a meeting in April 1985 that was held between Dr Henderson – the Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes – and the British Ambassador at the time, Patrick Moberly. The BSM demanded that the ambassador condemn the events of Uitenhage, and apartheid more generally. The ambassador responded by stating that he “can’t respond to this kind of gathering”.¹⁷³ He could not respond to the students because as a diplomat, he was only permitted to put out an official statement and, for him, this was not warranted since the students stormed into the meeting abruptly. One could also argue that no response was given, since he needed to follow official processes that were approved by the Prime Minister of the Conservative Party at the time, Margaret Thatcher. The BSM stated that their motivation for storming the meeting was because they had not been granted the opportunity to meet with someone with a high ranking to draw attention to the atrocities of apartheid.

Despite the dismissal of the BSM at the meeting with the British ambassador, these students continued with a protest held at a Rag event in which they once again drew attention to the Uitenhage massacre. The ramifications of drawing attention to this issue was that BSM protestors were “sjamboked” (beaten) by police.¹⁷⁴ The students were charged on Section 43 of the Internal Security Act which allowed the security police to “dissolve” organisations.¹⁷⁵ The BSM was critical of the police needing five martial to control the protest and the fact that the police had not acted when one of the BSM protestors were assaulted by (white) students in Rag. The Rag members shouted at one of the black protestors, stating that she should not be at the procession but rather that she “belonged in the kitchen”.¹⁷⁶ When asked about this incident, Dr. Henderson stated that he was “unsure” of whether the police had taken action against the BSM and that he was sympathetic to those who were upset about the deaths caused by police in Uitenhage. Henderson’s reaction demonstrates that he continued to indirectly to support the regime with his lack of involvement in issues such as police violence on students. His response showed little investment in the wellbeing of mostly black students who had been arrested by the police. This incident also displayed how apartheid and racism was not only present in the treatment of students by police, but additionally the fact that the university had indirectly condoned racist and sexist behaviour within the campus. During his tenure as VC, Henderson did not openly criticise state action or police brutality.

¹⁷³“Ambassador chokes on reality” in *Rhodeo*, 1985, p.5.

¹⁷⁴ A “sjambok” is a whip of South African origin that has been used over centuries as a tool of violence against black people.

¹⁷⁵ “Sharpeville continues” in *Rhodeo*, 1985, p.6.

¹⁷⁶ “Sharpeville continues” in *Rhodeo*, 1985, p.6.

In addition to drawing attention to the 1985 massacre, the BSM also placed pressure on the Vice-Chancellor to revoke the university permit system. The permit system allowed for black students to enrol at historically white universities if the course they wanted to take was not offered at a historically black university. One of the main successes of the BSM came in September 1985, when they presented a set of demands which included the issue of permits for black pharmacy students.¹⁷⁷ The demands were handed over to the Vice-Chancellor which stated that a letter must be sent to the Ministry of Education and Culture condemning the permit system. Secondly, the BSM demanded that the academic Swedish point system be revised. The point system was a standardised scale which calculated the school leavers mark and converted it to university entrance points. The accumulative point system accepted students for their degree if their cumulative points were high enough. They wanted academics with “credibility amongst students to be allowed to form a new bursary committee to monitor allocations”. This enabled academics to use their discretion where necessary to admit deserving students.¹⁷⁸ A further demand was that the Vice-Chancellor write a letter to prospective pharmacy students demanding that they withdraw from Turfloop – a black university – which offered pharmacy courses in an attempt to draw attention to and boycott a racially unjust tertiary education system. They further stated that they would write letters to overseas universities, demanding that they ban pharmacy lecturers at historically white universities from attending conferences. This was meant to pressure affected academics to support the call for change. Additionally, many of the BSM members were studying pharmacy or were employed in the pharmacy department at this time, such as Ashwin Desai. Furthermore, the BSM wanted international donor funds to be fully utilised on bursaries for ‘black’ students as it suspected that the university had not been allocating the full amounts to student bursaries. These demands show how the BSM wanted a complete eradication of the permit system, since it limited the mobility of students and reinforced the control the apartheid government had over the quality of education black students received.

When the issue of the permit system went to the press, the Vice Chancellor agreed to the BSM’s demands; however, he later decided that the allocation of bursaries needed to be negotiated. According to *Rhodeo*, the initial forceful letter to Turfloop was later withdrawn and replaced with a more “reasonable one”.¹⁷⁹ This event shows that the BSM was able to put pressure on

¹⁷⁷ “Turning their Backs on Racism” in *Rhodeo*, September 1985, p.3.

¹⁷⁸ Unknown author, “Turning their Backs on Racism” in *Rhodeo*, September 1985, p.3.

¹⁷⁹ Unknown author, “Turning their Backs on Racism” in *Rhodeo*, September 1985, p.3.

the Vice Chancellor to attempt to make a change in the broader national framework of tertiary education for black students.

The BSM also made demands of the university in other areas, such as sport. At the end of the 1970s, the sports boycott was implemented and used as a form of resistance to isolate the South African regime and demand the end of apartheid.¹⁸⁰ The debate around racially-mixed sporting teams and events raged in South Africa at this time in response to the boycott that the international community had placed. Many South African citizens had boycotted local sport matches, despite attempts toward incorporating non-racialism within sport, segregation in the 1970s constantly manifested itself. For example, black sportspeople could play a match overseas, but could neither receive sport accolades in the South African team, nor represent South Africa at international federations.¹⁸¹ Some sports federations ignored the laws and had non-racial teams. Black African athletes detested separatism in matches as it demonstrated the inherent racism that persisted in sport. Racism in sport at Rhodes was challenged by the BSM, who organised a sports boycott in 1985. The reason for their boycott was that Rhodes did not place any importance on black sport at the university. The BSM made a socio-political statement of the ongoing segregation of the student body through sport. They noted that the university cannot have integrated sport in an “abnormal” society.¹⁸² This meant that, despite sports team being able to consist of players of different races, it did not change the fact that black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian people were still oppressed in their everyday lives.

The BSM also led a protest in 1987 which consisted of 250 students. The protest was centred around the issue of discrimination of bursaries, as well as sports bursaries. Thirteen out of one hundred and twenty-seven bursaries at Rhodes were allocated to black students.¹⁸³ In addition, there were no sports bursaries of the thirty-six bursaries allocated to black students.¹⁸⁴ Due to no response from the university, a second protest was held and there was some damage to university property. The Vice-Chancellor was away at this time but when he returned, he agreed to allow the students to share their grievances with Senate. On 3 April 1987, the BSM

¹⁸⁰ Douglas Booth, “Hitting Apartheid for Six: The politics of the South African sports boycott”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38, 3, p.477.

¹⁸¹ Douglas Booth, “Hitting Apartheid for Six: The politics of the South African sports boycott”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38, 3, p.477.

¹⁸² Mvuso Mbembe to Dr Derek Henderson, in “Sports and Bursary Problems”, 28 July 1987, Cory Library C5, PR7457.

¹⁸³ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.219.

¹⁸⁴ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.219.

presented their demands to Senate, which showed some sympathy towards the organisation's demands.¹⁸⁵ Senate agreed to "amend their awarding of bursaries" and to create a committee that would "consider issues concerning black sport".¹⁸⁶ This demonstrates the BSM's persistence to address institutional racism and discrimination and indicates that the BSM was gaining legitimacy within the university structures. The BSM obtained progress through their demands addressing the needs of black African, 'coloured' and Indian students which the SRC had failed to achieve.

In the same year, the BSM continued to draw attention to issues that black students at Rhodes contested. For instance, it highlighted the lack of financial support from fundraising organisations such as Rag towards black students, many of whom were in financial need. Despite being a fundraising organisation, Rag distanced itself from assisting these financially disadvantaged students. Ashwin Desai, who was part of the BSM, stated that "(b)ecause Rag is used as a medium, an incredible amount of money that should be going to our people is lost somewhere along the way".¹⁸⁷ The BSM additionally drew attention to racism within student organisations through their interaction with Rag. In a *Rhodeo* article, Rag ignored the pressing issue of racism within organisation. Rag did not respond to this allegation but rather responded to the financial comment by stating that Rag's objectives were to raise funds for broader community programs such as underprivileged schools.¹⁸⁸ This shows how little support towards black students in financial need was given and how the BSM attempted to correct this by debating with Rag.

The BSM also drew attention to the unfair detentions of black students under apartheid. They did this specifically through a graduation boycott in 1987.¹⁸⁹ The BSM issued a statement on graduation in April 1987 using the slogan, "No graduation until the people govern".¹⁹⁰ The objective of this was to create a "political strategy to protest against the racist and deliberately discriminatory education system".¹⁹¹ They drew attention to the fact that there were BSM students in detention and that a boycott would make a "dent on the apartheid state".¹⁹² They

¹⁸⁵ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.219.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.219.

¹⁸⁷ "The Great Debate" in *Rhodeo*, 1987, p.3.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with a participant who was a past Rag Chair in 1983, 4 June, 2019.

¹⁸⁹ SRC minutes March 1987, Cory library C5, MS 17 795.

¹⁹⁰ Statement on Graduation by BSM Projects Comm, April 1987, Cory Library C5, PR7457.

¹⁹¹ Statement on Graduation by BSM Projects Comm, April 1987, Cory Library C5, PR7457.

¹⁹² Statement on Graduation by BSM Projects Comm, April 1987, Cory Library C5, PR7457.

felt that graduation could not be celebrated if their peers were in jail and that *Die Stem*, the national anthem of South Africa under apartheid, which they believed to be “all that is wrong in SA”, should not be played.¹⁹³ This call to boycott created tensions between the SRC and the BSM, as they had both felt differently over the issue. The SRC believed students could choose if they wanted to boycott their graduation. However, the SRC also agreed that *Die Stem* was demonstrative of the National Party’s oppressive regime and should not be sung at the ceremony. This highlights some attempt on the part of the SRC to draw attention to the need for change at Rhodes. However, by providing little support for the boycott, the SRC failed to represent the interests of black students fighting for change. The BSM motivated for the boycott, stating that it was to show solidarity with oppressed people throughout South Africa and fight for “People’s Power”.¹⁹⁴ The BSM’s statement demonstrated that they sought to represent black students and give them a voice, whereas the SRC took a more complacent stance. Some black students, however, were not in support of the BSM for various reasons. According to interview participants of the BSM, some black students did not want to support or join the BSM due to religious affiliations or because their families were homeland (Bantustan) leaders and therefore would not have supported the BSM’s politics and anti-apartheid views.¹⁹⁵ This demonstrates that not all black African students were part of the BSM, nor did they necessarily support the organisation’s position on institutional and national change.

The BSM existed in a time when, as a student organisation, they faced numerous challenges, especially the threat of the security police. One of the challenges was that one of their student leaders, Thabiso Ratsomo, was detained after his residence room was raided by security police in 1987.¹⁹⁶ The reason for this was because the security police wanted to “clamp down” on UDF activities, in which students such as Ratsomo had been involved.¹⁹⁷ Ratsomo believed that the raid was intended to suppress the activities of black students and that the institution was complicit since the Registrar had known of the campus raid. The BSM offices on campus were raided and documents related to the BSM were taken.¹⁹⁸ Ratsomo was later detained, sparking other student organisations, such as the Muslim Students Organisation, Hindu Students Society and NUSAS, to march through campus in protest and solidarity. Workshops

¹⁹³ Statement on Graduation by BSM Projects Comm, April 1987, Cory library C5, PR7457.

¹⁹⁴ Statement on Graduation by BSM Projects Comm, April 1987, Cory library C5, PR7457.

¹⁹⁵ Interviews with numerous men and women students who were part of the BSM 1980-1986, August 2019.

¹⁹⁶ “Security Police raid Residences” in *Rhodeo*, March 1985, p.3.

¹⁹⁷ “Security Police raid Residences” in *Rhodeo*, 1985, p.3.

¹⁹⁸ “Security Police raid Residences” in *Rhodeo*, 1985, p.3.

were also held on campus to highlight “the role of black students on a liberal campus”, the Freedom Charter and women’s role in the struggle.¹⁹⁹ The objectives were to “make people aware of the situation in South Africa and hoped to encourage them to become active in the ongoing programmes of organisations”.²⁰⁰ This shows how various organisations with objectives that resonated with the UDF would have shown solidarity with students in detention. Due to the arrests of Ratsomo and various politically active students on campus, the student body was concerned with the detention of local students, and more broadly with the issue of students, who were affiliated to organisations such as UDF, across South Africa being detained.²⁰¹

The BSM was banned and reorganised itself in 1989 as the Black Students’ Coordinating Committee (BSCC).²⁰² The BSCC, alongside the SRC, presented a set of demands which called for the release of a theology student, Sidwell Mogothu, who was detained.²⁰³ The BSCC and SRC demanded that the university become more active in protecting the students from members of the Security Branch. The university stated that it could do very little because of the state of emergency that enabled the Security Branch to act on actions that they viewed as illegal.²⁰⁴

Conclusion

This chapter examined the BSM as a significant radical organisation that operated at Rhodes University, a historically white institution. The BSM’s values were synonymous with black consciousness, but it also closely affiliated with the UDF’s and ANC’s objectives, despite a politically repressive state and complacent university leadership in the 1980s. It was a single organisation that operated at Rhodes University despite its name suggesting that it was a movement. The BSM, however, had affiliations to various broader political and student organisations such as the BSS at Wits. Its participation in national and local politics can be seen in the various protests discussed. The BSM was an alternative student representative structure which addressed the needs of black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian students on

¹⁹⁹ “Solidarity with Students” in *Rhodeo*, June 1985, p.5.

²⁰⁰ “Solidarity with Students” in *Rhodeo*, June 1985, p.5.

²⁰¹ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.221.

²⁰² Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.221.

²⁰³ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.221.

²⁰⁴ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Cape Town, 2017), p.221.

campus, specifically because the complacent SRC failed to actively address racism and oppression within the university and its own structures in the 1980s. The BSM teaches historians about a black student organisation that not only practiced banned politics at a white institution and challenged national politics, but additionally attempted to address issues of apartheid in the institution. Rhodes University, a small university in the Eastern Cape, often had its contributions to broader national politics overlooked. It is evident in this chapter that, that the university was a “hot bed” for anti-apartheid politics. This resulted in government interest which manifested itself through the deployment of informants against activists within Rhodes University. The BSM had a significant impact on broader politics which resulted in its banning by the state in 1987. In 1989 it strategically renamed itself to the BSCC, adopting a more collaborative role with the SRC. The BSCC would later merge into the SRC in the 1990s as some of its leaders were elected as SRC leadership.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Interview with participant d, 27 June, 2019.

Chapter 3: Struggle and Transition in the 1990s at Rhodes University

Introduction

Neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s spread throughout the developing world. Its main tenet was the deregulation of the economy and it encouraged the privatisation of education, transport, telecommunications.²⁰⁶ Neoliberalism in Africa resulted in protests particularly in North Africa. In South Africa, the government responded to neoliberal pressures with the objective of re-entering the global market following a period of economic crises and sanctions.²⁰⁷ University institutions also responded by reviewing their admissions criteria, which allowed students of all races to enrol at universities of their choice. This occurred as a result of the democratic transition in the 1990s²⁰⁸ as well as the need to ensure their economic sustainability by growing student numbers. Black African, 'coloured' and Indian students continued to experience challenges accessing tertiary education. Unequal secondary education and high tuition costs for students ensured limited access to tertiary institutions. In addition, further secondary issues were highlighted by student protests and created awareness of issues such as women's and gay rights.²⁰⁹

This chapter examines Rhodes University during the 1990s and demonstrates how the university only transformed at a superficial level, failing to acknowledge the intersectional issues of race, class and gender that still affected black African, 'coloured', and Indian students. During this era there was a rise of secondary movements which was demonstrated through the formation of the women's movement, increased gay rights awareness, and the lack of accessibility to resources.²¹⁰ Furthermore, this chapter will argue that, despite students drawing attention to national and institutional issues, the demonstrated lack of activism in the mid-1990s was attributed to the euphoria of anticipated changes brought by democracy.

²⁰⁶ Margaret Hansen & James J. Hentz, "Neo-colonialism and Neoliberalism in South Africa and Zambia", *The Journal of Public and International Affairs*, 114, 3, 1999, p.479.

²⁰⁷ Margaret Hansen & James J. Hentz, "Neo-colonialism and Neoliberalism in South Africa and Zambia", *The Journal of Public and International Affairs*, 114, 3, 1999, p.479.

²⁰⁸ Margaret Hansen & James J. Hentz, "Neo-colonialism and Neoliberalism", p.479.

²⁰⁹ SRC Minutes: meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, 12.2.1993 - 5.11.1994 / Students' Representative Council, Cory Library C5.

²¹⁰ SRC Minutes: meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, 12.2.1993 - 5.11.1994 / Students' Representative Council, Cory Library C5.

Transitional Politics and South African Universities in the 1990s

In the 1990s, there were various nationwide discussions about the impending end of white minority rule. The African National Congress (ANC) was unbanned, political prisoners were freed and, in 1993, political negotiations began to take place.²¹¹ There were various global and national pressures to end white minority rule in South Africa. One of the contributing factors was the collapse of communist rule signalled by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.²¹² The implication in South Africa was that the National Party (NP) could no longer use anti-communist fearmongering to uphold white minority rule. The other global factor that influenced collapse of the apartheid regime was international pressure, particularly in the form of economic sanctions. South Africa was plunged into a deep recession which placed further pressures on the NP.²¹³ The NP lacked access to foreign capital and was unable to compete in a global market.²¹⁴ The political and economic climate ignited discussions within the government to re-evaluate the apartheid system. The size of the white population also shrunk to 15% due to increased emigration,²¹⁵ while the shortage of skilled labour and strikes by the black labour force added pressure to the government to implement labour reforms.²¹⁶ This also altered class compositions of black African, 'coloured' and Indian communities through differential education and income.²¹⁷ The urban revolts of 1976 also fuelled more radical black African worker action which added pressure on the state.²¹⁸

There were numerous other reasons for the decline of apartheid in the 1990s, including a lasting internal split in the National Party (NP) which stemmed from the 1960s. The split was apparent in the division between 'verligtes'²¹⁹ and 'verkramptes'²²⁰. The 'verligtes' drew support from a political elite of clergy, intellectuals and businessmen.²²¹ The 'verkramptes' consisted of farmers, individuals in politics and "lower-level civil workers" and differed from the 'verligtes'

²¹¹ Christopher Saunders and Rodney Davenport, *South Africa: a Modern History*, (New York, 2000), p.559

²¹² Stephen Ellis, "Africa after the Cold War: New Patterns of Governments and Politics", *Development and Change*, 27, 1, 1996, p.261

²¹³ Stephen Ellis, "Africa after the Cold War: New Patterns of Governments and Politics", *Development and Change*, 27, 1, 1996, p.261

²¹⁴ Stephen Ellis, "Africa after the Cold War", p.262

²¹⁵ Stephen Ellis, "Africa after the Cold War", p.262

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.263

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.264

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.264

²¹⁹ Verligtes is defined as "enlightened".

²²⁰ "Cramped up" or conservative and opposed 'liberal' trends.

²²¹ Herman Giliomee, "Apartheid, Verligtheid, and Liberalism", in Jeffrey Butler, Richard Elphick and David Welsh (eds.), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Connecticut, 1987), p.376.

as they believed in white supremacy.²²² The ‘verligtes’ wanted to transfer some wealth from the rich to the poor and advocated to the West that changes were underway; however, it did not want a split in the NP. Some ‘verligtes’ who favoured neoliberalism wanted to safeguard the capitalist system rather than “Afrikaner hegemony”. Neoliberalism enabled the continuation of the white privileged elite, while also developing a black elite which was co-opted into alliances with the state. Additionally, they wanted a “freer rein to market forces” which would emphasise individual rights, decentralised power and freedom of association.²²³

In May 1990, the NP and the ANC agreed to have a meeting to discuss the process for future negotiations. This was known as the Groote Schuur Minute which “laid down the conditions for the safe returns of exiles who had left South Africa illegally or merely belonged to unlawful organisations, or whose return would help in ending of violence or promoting peaceful negotiations”.²²⁴ The Internal Security Act under apartheid banned individuals and organisations, enabling detentions without trial. The Act was repealed after the initial Groote Schuur Minute of 1990. This meant that organisations such as the ANC and individuals such as Nelson Mandela were unbanned, released from jail and returned to South Africa. The negotiation process between 1990 and 1994 was turbulent and the political climate was tense. FW De Klerk, president of South Africa at the time, called for an all-party congress to “tackle the first stage of the negotiations” but suspicions and mistrust were present when he addressed the fact that the ANC had not disbanded the armed wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK),²²⁵ which carried out acts of sabotage to facilitate rapid political change.²²⁶

As a result of increased violence in the 1990s, the South African Institute of Race Relations stated that, in the period between 1990-1994, there were 14,807 fatalities.²²⁷ One of culprits of these fatalities was the unknown ‘Third Force’, which was a term used by the ANC to refer to illicit violence allegedly carried out by the NP and “askaris”. “Askaris” were individuals who were used as collaborators and/or informants to the security police and who had also tortured and murdered anti-apartheid activists.²²⁸ The National Peace Accord of 1991 was implemented

²²² Herman Giliomee, “Apartheid, Verligtheid, and Liberalism”, in Jeffrey Butler, Richard Elphick and David Welsh (eds.), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Connecticut, 1987), p.376.

²²³ Herman Giliomee, “Apartheid, Verligtheid, and Liberalism”, in Jeffrey Butler, Richard Elphick and David Welsh (eds.), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Connecticut, 1987), p.376.

²²⁴ Christopher Saunders and Rodney Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (New York, 2000), p.559.

²²⁵ Christopher Saunders and Rodney Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (New York, 2000), p.559.

²²⁶ Christopher Saunders and Rodney Davenport, *South Africa*, p.559.

²²⁷ South African Institute of Race relations, *Race relations survey 1989/1990* (Johannesburg, 2016) p.60.

²²⁸ Stephen Ellis, “The Historical Significance of South Africa’s Third force”, *Journal of South African Studies*, 24, 2, 1998, p261.

to curb widespread violence; however, it failed because of the presence of Third Force violence which aimed to “perpetrate violence in the service of a counter revolutionary strategy”.²²⁹ Despite numerous calls for peace by FW De Klerk and Nelson Mandela, political tensions were present as the ANC believed that the NP funded violence in an attempt to destabilise the process of transition.²³⁰

Third Force violence manifested itself through various incidents. For instance, random attacks of violence on black South Africans occurred in the Vaal and the East Rand areas (present-day Gauteng). Nelson Mandela was angered by these attacks and believed that they were orchestrated by government death squads who assassinated individuals they believed were a political threat.²³¹ Furthermore, a conflict in the Natal Midlands occurred in 1990 which involved Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and ANC members. This was an incident where 80 United Democratic Front (UDF) members were killed by IFP members.²³²

Violence throughout South Africa also manifested itself in the form of protesting students in Gugulethu. The Pan African Students’ Organisation (PASO) was relaunched and aggressive remarks by leaders were made such as “one settler, one bullet” to fire up and mobilise crowds. Student and anti-apartheid activist Amy Biehl gave her colleagues a lift to Gugulethu and was stopped en-route by an angry PASO mob, which stoned and stabbed her to death.²³³ According to the TRC report on the incident of Biehl’s murder, some members of PASO had interpreted the call for destabilising townships as a request to murder white people. This is an example of third force manipulation of political organisations to ensure instability within South Africa and therefore undermined the negotiation processes.

Despite the tense political situation, in 1993 an agreement was made between Roelf Meyer of the NP and Cyril Ramaphosa from the ANC known as the Record of Understanding. They agreed that the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) talks were ineffective. As a result of this, the process of negotiations commenced. In 1993, the assassination of Chris

²²⁹ Stephen Ellis, “The Historical Significance of South Africa’s Third force”, *Journal of South African Studies*, 24, 2, 1998, p.263.

²³⁰ Stephen Ellis, “The Historical Significance of South Africa’s Third force”, *Journal of South African Studies*, 24, 2, 1998, p.263.

²³¹ Stephen Ellis, “The Historical Significance of South Africa’s Third force”, *Journal of South African Studies*, 24, 2, 1998, p.261.

²³² Stephen Ellis, “The Historical Significance of South Africa’s Third force”, *Journal of South African Studies*, 24, 2, 1998, p.261.

²³³ TRC final report, “The killing of Amy Biehl”, 6, 3, 4, 16, 28 July 1998.

Hani enhanced the pace of negotiations as there was a threat of escalated violence with his death. Consequently, this resulted in the first election before the end of April 1994.²³⁴

The call for transition was rejected by some right-wing groups such as the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB).²³⁵ The AWB utilised an armoured vehicle which damaged the entrance to the World Trade Centre. This enabled their khaki uniformed members to storm the venue in an attempt to instil fear amongst present press and negotiators.²³⁶ These actions, however, were not endorsed by more “moderate” Afrikaans officials who had initially joined in a petition with the AWB and wanted to hand over demands at the World Trade Centre. Constand Viljoen, who was a commander of the military, pleaded with AWB members not to damage the building or incite violence but he was ignored.

On the 27th of April 1994, black Africans were excited to vote for the first time – since their voting rights were previously deferred to the Bantustans. Three hundred thousand workers were employed across nine hundred voting stations in South Africa and facilitated the first multi-party elections. The electoral process faced numerous challenges surrounding the counting of votes and some reports indicated that there had been intimidation at some voting stations. At the end of the election, the results were tallied and the ANC had won in seven of the nine provinces. The euphoria in South Africa was high and citizens anticipated the implementation of changes that would promote equality and freedom for all.²³⁷ The newly-adopted democratic constitution also meant that education was a right for all citizens. This allowed mobility and gave students the ability to choose their preferred tertiary institution. As a result of this transition, there was an increase in the enrolment of black students at historically white universities. Historically black universities (HBUs), such as the University of Western Cape (UWC) and the University of Durban-Westville (UDW), had the largest enrolment of black African students.²³⁸ In 1990, black African students at white institutions consisted of 36% which increased by 11% from 1985. The increase of black students at historically white institutions meant that black students could influence and place pressure on university administrations.²³⁹ At Rhodes University in 1990, of the 3963 enrolled students, 548 were black African, 189 were Indian and 136 were ‘coloured’. These students would, however,

²³⁴ T.R.H. Davenport, *The transfer of Power in South Africa* (Cape Town,1998), p.10.

²³⁵ T.R.H. Davenport, *The transfer of Power in South Africa* (Cape Town,1998), p.10.

²³⁶ T.R.H. Davenport, *The transfer of Power in South Africa* (Cape Town,1998), p.10.

²³⁷ T.R.H. Davenport, *The transfer of Power in South Africa* (Cape Town,1998), p.10.

²³⁸ Saleem Badat, *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and Apartheid* (Pretoria,1999), p.197.

²³⁹ Saleem Badat, *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and Apartheid* (Pretoria,1999), p.197.

challenge unresolved issues from the apartheid era in the context of the 1990s where ‘rainbowism’ was the dominant discourse.

By 1994, higher education was “fragmented and uncoordinated” and institutions were “governed in strong authoritarian ways”.²⁴⁰ Institutions had not adapted to democracy and academic curricula, and policies and administration remained untransformed. This demonstrates the challenges that higher education faced in the 1990s, manifested in the uncertainty regarding policies and their implementation. These issues were first addressed in 1996 with the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as well as the implementation of White Paper 3 in 1997. The NQF was a qualifications framework established by the government in 1996 in order to address the inequities and fragmentation of the previous system. The NQF system meant that qualifications would be standardised across institutions. White Paper 3 was designed to look at transformation in higher education and stressed for the increase of access for black women, the disabled, and mature students who were previously marginalised from institutions of higher learning.²⁴¹ It also requested that new curricula and teaching methods be created and “accommodate a larger and more diverse student population”.²⁴² The NQF was a “fundamental element in the realisation of notions of democratisation of knowledge and access to higher education institutions”.²⁴³ The White Paper of 1997 required that high-level skills training be implemented to strengthen “the country’s enterprises, services and infrastructure”. This meant developing citizens who are “socially responsible to their role in contributing to the national development effort and social transformation”.²⁴⁴ White Paper 3 required “production, acquisition and application of new knowledge” which meant that there needed to be a responsiveness to societal needs and interests, and to “participate in a rapidly changing and competitive global context”.²⁴⁵ This demonstrates South Africa’s need to respond to neoliberal pressures and re-enter the global market with a qualified and economically active workforce.

In the 1990s, student politics shifted from eradicating apartheid to issues such as gender and access and was aligned with the growing international agenda of social engineering. These

²⁴⁰ Ian Bunting, *Transformation of Higher Education* (New York,2006), p.40.

²⁴¹ Ian Bunting, *Transformation of Higher Education* (New York,2006), p.40.

²⁴² Ian Bunting, *Transformation of Higher Education* (New York,2006), p.40.

²⁴³ Lis Lange, “20 Years of Higher Education Policy in South Africa”, *Journal of Education*, 68, 2017, p.35.

²⁴⁴ Department of Education, General notice 1196 of 1997, Education White Paper 3, “Programme for the Transformation of Higher education”, July 1997, p.6.

²⁴⁵ Department of Education, General notice 1196 of 1997, Education White Paper 3, “Programme for the Transformation of Higher education”, July 1997, p.6.

were common issues raised by society after the collapse of communism in 1989. The end of apartheid witnessed an increase in enrolments of students who were previously denied access to historically white universities, however socio-economic factors such as funding and technology were not addressed in this transition. SRCs at historically white institutions also began to increase in black African representation in light of the national transitional politics prior to the 1994 elections. SASCO and PASO were dominant in student politics at Fort Hare and Rhodes University in the 1990s. At Rhodes, students would draw attention to the issues of access and gender; however, protests in the mid-1990s took place less often than in the 1980s due to post-apartheid euphoria and a more consultative relationship between administration and the new SRC. Protests at Fort Hare would continue until the late 1990s when the university became inclusive of black African staff on committees and in decision-making processes.²⁴⁶

Black African students in the 1990s demanded access to resources denied due to Bantu Education and apartheid. Students who were part of the South African National Students Congress (SANSCO) and the merged SRC, would challenge this notion at Rhodes University. This was an attempt to transform the university in an era of national political transition.

After the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, student organisations such as NUSAS and SANSCO discussed their formation regarding a potential merger as suggested by ANC leader, Andrew Mlangeni. Discussions around the future of SANSCO and its relationship to other civic organisations began to take place. The merging process reflected the national political agenda towards non-racialism. The BSM merged into the SRC and disbanded as an organisation. A new collaborative representative body began to address the need for transformation at Rhodes University. Discussions on transformation encouraged students to unite and participate in “building a new country”.²⁴⁷ Errol Moorcraft, who was the Deputy Minister of the Albany district, which is within the Eastern Cape Province and centred around former Grahamstown, called on both black and white students to “find each other on campus” in order to unite. The UDF secretary Mkhuseleli Jack stated that the student organisations such as SANSCO and NUSAS needed to recruit “(especially) white students”. He further added that, “white students must be told that it is not a crime to be born into a system which gives them privileges. But when your conscience says it wants out, then you must opt out of that system”. Jack further stated that NUSAS and SANSCO should form one unified

²⁴⁶ Rico Devera Chapman, *Student Resistance to Apartheid at the University of Fort Hare* (London, 2016) p.83.

²⁴⁷ Unknown author, “GTOWN and PE can be the Miami’s of South Africa”, *Rhodeo*, April 1990, p.2

body “when the time is right”. This demonstrates the agenda of student politics which aimed to create non-racial organisations and mirrored the national agenda of democracy.

By 1990, the BSM had renamed itself to SANSCO and supported NUSAS in a “non-racialism campaign” which was launched to involve students in the new transformed organisation.²⁴⁸ Despite attempts at non-racialism which resonated with broader politics of the time, it was decided that there would not be a formal link between SRCs and the merger organisation until 1991. The decision was rather that SRCs should represent the interests of students on campus and that the new organisation’s objectives were to help SRCs at HBUs to “get off the ground” and to challenge SRC’s policies and activities in order to facilitate change.²⁴⁹ As a result of the merger, SASCO was formed. SASCO represented black African students who were aligned with ANC politics and had a strong presence on campus. SASCO was sceptical of non-racialism and doubted that substantial change would occur. The issue of uncertainty persisted through organisations such as the Pan African Students Organisation (PASO) who prevented total unification and collaboration in 1990. This resonated with the broader uncertainties regarding transition in South Africa. It was later decided that the merger would be implemented from June 1991.

Despite attempts at non-racialism at a national and local student level through the merger organisation, the issue of transformation remained on the agenda in 1991. The colonial ideologies of the university were challenged in a *Rhodeo* article which was titled “Rhodes cannot remain as the Oxford in the bush”.²⁵⁰ This article emerged as a response to the small percentages of black African students on campus and particularly those from rural communities. The article addressed the issue of the persistent preservation of a colonial institution despite the increased demands for political and socio-economic transformation. The article stated that despite national attempts at non-racialism, only 21% of the student body was “black” of which 12% were “African”.²⁵¹ Many of the black students who came to Rhodes were from urban areas. The article urged Rhodes to transform and stated that with Dr. Henderson’s mindset of “Rhodes is the Oxford in the Bush”, Rhodes could not progress. The writer stated, “That’s fine, Oxford is a top university, but Britain is not developing South Africa and the pressures on Rhodes are different”.²⁵² Despite drawing attention to the need of

²⁴⁸ Unknown author, “Student Organisation are forging ahead with unity”, *Rhodeo*, April 1991, p.9

²⁴⁹ Unknown author, “Merger draws closer”, *Rhodeo*, May 1991, p.3 (Cory Library).

²⁵⁰ Unknown author, “Rhodes cannot remain the Oxford in the Bush”, *Rhodeo*, April 1991, p.11

²⁵¹ Unknown author, “Rhodes cannot remain the Oxford in the Bush” in *Rhodeo*, April 1991, p.11

²⁵² Unknown author, “Rhodes cannot remain the Oxford in the Bush”, *Rhodeo*, April 1991, p.11.

transformation within the institution, leadership remained attached to preserving a colonial institution and were hesitant to transform.

There were various factors that hindered transformation at Rhodes, one being the Swedish Point System which was used to determine eligibility for admission to Rhodes University. The Swedish Point System was a numeric grading based on the grades obtained per Matric subject, to which a maximum of five points were awarded for a distinction and descending points were awarded for lower grades. Due to the disparity of the education system, students that were educated under Bantu Education had reduced points as a result of their inadequate education, and this precluded them from entrance into university. The entrance points varied depending on the degree on offer at the institution. Some measures to redress this issue would be implemented in the 2000s with a new admissions system known as National Benchmark Tests (NBTs). NBTs were used to test literacy and numeracy and enabled promising students the opportunity to enrol in university regardless of points or quality of secondary education.

The transformation of the university council was also challenged as it predominately consisted of “white middle class” citizens, and black African students and staff had “little say over the direction of the university”.²⁵³ The SRC president at the time, Rod Amner, stated that the university needed to propose research that was in the interest of the broader community.²⁵⁴ Additionally, Amner stated that the admissions policy needed to be reevaluated with urgency.²⁵⁵

During the 1990s, the SRC began to work with SANSCO on issues surrounding black students in the university which were synonymous with democratic objectives being debated in national discourse at the time. In 1990, one of the main issues of concern by SANSCO was Rhodes’ admission, expulsion and exclusion policies.²⁵⁶ In addition, the university had not adequately addressed the question of bursaries for black students. As a result, SANSCO had called for a national stayaway to “expose high failure and expulsion rates”.²⁵⁷ Other universities such as Wits, UDW and UWC had witnessed clashes between the administration and the Black Students’ Society (BSS).

²⁵³ Unknown author, “Rhodes cannot remain the Oxford in the Bush”, *Rhodeo*, April 1991, p.11.

²⁵⁴ Unknown author, “Rhodes cannot remain the Oxford in the Bush”, *Rhodeo*, April 1991, p.11.

²⁵⁵ Unknown author, “BSM challenges Rhodes admin to follow UCT’s Lead and review its admissions policy”, *Rhodeo*, March 1990, p.5.

²⁵⁶ Unknown author, “BSM challenges Rhodes admin to follow UCT’s Lead and review its admissions policy”, *Rhodeo*, March 1990, p.5.

²⁵⁷ Unknown author, “GTOWN and PE can be the Miami’s of South Africa”, *Rhodeo*, April 1990, p.2.

In 1991, SANSCO agreed to be part of the first non-racial SRC and participated in council elections, on condition that past BSM members would remain a “watch-dog” for black students’ interests on campus. During the term, SANSCO members distributed pamphlets that discussed the issue of bursaries and exclusions which remained a problem for black students at Rhodes.²⁵⁸ One SANSCO member who later joined the SRC recalled the climate at Rhodes in 1991. He stated that the political climate was “optimistic” and “hopeful” because Nelson Mandela was released from prison.²⁵⁹ This statement reflected the optimism of students during the democratic transition. Furthermore, he said that SANSCO would not be affected by racial composition. This indicates that the relationship between student organisations were primarily collaborative during the 1990s. The regional NUSAS organiser at the time, Rod Dixon, championed a non-racial SRC. Some students’ organisations such as PASO were sceptical of the non-racial SRC.

The Rhodes University branch of the Pan African Students Organisation (PASO) was formed in 1991 and was aligned with the PAC. One of their objectives included showing “unfailing vigilance towards any ideology which while claiming to be progressive, conceals the interest of the imperialist”.²⁶⁰ PASO questioned the administration as they believed that colonialism was maintained by university leadership. PASO would similarly challenge the SRC and their need for the non-racial restructuring in the 1990s.²⁶¹ The chair, Musa Hlekani, stated that black students should “guard against being co-opted into an SRC without the deep restructuring of it”.²⁶² Despite the SRC itself moving towards non-racialism, hesitations still remained due to the uncertainty of transformation both nationally and within the SRC. Hlekani stated that the NUSAS/SANSCO affiliation was something that PASO accepted, but due to not knowing “who stands where” on the SRC, PASO chose to distance itself from the non-racial SRC election.²⁶³ This statement demonstrates that some organisations such as PASO were critical of the euphoria that students were experiencing and somewhat sceptical of the unfolding of the democratic transition. Secondary issues such as gender emerged mirroring international political trends.

²⁵⁸ Unknown author, “First non-racial SRC soon”, *Rhodeo*, August 1991, p.2.

²⁵⁹ Interview with former SANSCO member and SRC representative (1989-1993), July 2019.

²⁶⁰ “Pan Africanism: an outline”, MS 18 399 (Cory Library).

²⁶¹ Newsletter of PASO (RU), “The young Africanist” folder 1, 1993, Cory Library C5.

²⁶² Unknown author, “First non-racial SRC soon”, *Rhodeo*, August 1991, p.2.

²⁶³ Unknown author, “First non-racial SRC soon”, *Rhodeo*, August 1991, p.2.

In the 1990s, feminist scholars noted that the “hegemonic feminism” ignored issues of gender, race and class. Intersectionality was a term coined in 1991 by feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, and was a branch of third wave feminism.²⁶⁴ In South Africa, during the democratic transition, the issue of gender was highlighted to address oppressions faced by South African women under apartheid.²⁶⁵ Nationally, gender rights still largely focused on the rights of white women, failing to acknowledge the double oppression that black African, Indian and ‘coloured’ women faced.

At Rhodes University, a family planning clinic was established, and an awareness and education campaign were created to address the increased levels of “promiscuity” on campus – supposedly demonstrated through six pregnancies a term. Subsequently, the SRC requested that contraception be made available through “condom vending machines” in campus bathrooms.²⁶⁶ This campaign is important in understanding the SRC’s concern with reproductive health and sexuality on campus which was synonymous with national democratic non-sexist objectives. However, it was not concerned at this time with the intersectional oppressions of race, class and gender that students faced. These measures implemented by the university did not solve the issues that black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian women and marginalised groups experienced.

Issues of rape and gender-based violence were addressed in *Rhodeo* in August 1990 by students who were affiliated to national movements such as the UDF. These students had written to the newspaper stating that they had felt unsafe on campus or that they had been sexually harassed. One student recalled her experience, where she had been followed by a man in a car from the Drostdy Arch, an entrance onto campus, to her residence.²⁶⁷ As she entered her residence, the person who had followed her drove away. A NUSAS president at the time, Erika Elk addressed the Rhodes community on 9 August 1990, stating that women “don’t come forward because of the fear of intimidation” when they experience harassment. In the *Rhodeo* article, Jesse Breytenbach was interviewed as a leader of the Women’s Group. The Women’s Group was a Rhodes society for women students to discuss feminist theory and the issues faced by women. She stated that, “As women, we must fight against sexist practices. We must change the laws

²⁶⁴ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color”, *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 6, 1991, p.1241.

²⁶⁵ Shireen Hassim “The Gender Pact and Democratic Consolidation: Institutionalizing Gender Equality in the South African State,” *Feminist Studies*, 29, 3, 2003, p.506.

²⁶⁶ SRC Minutes: meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, February 1990, (Cory Library C5.

²⁶⁷ Unknown author, “Are Women Safe at Rhodes”, *Rhodeo*, August 1990, p.9.

that govern our society at present which, by the way, have all been written by men. But as South Africans, we need to fight for a new social order – a social order that will have, at its roots, the potential for the liberation of all people – women included.”²⁶⁸ Furthermore, the Women’s Group was aligned with the UDF’s principle of non-sexism; however, it failed to explicitly address the interconnectedness of non-racialism and non-sexism, which were two key principles of the UDF. This demonstrates that student societies, such as the Women’s Group, attempted to unite women, but failed to acknowledge the intersectional oppressions experienced by marginalised groups in society.²⁶⁹

In 1991, the Women’s Group under the SRC had conducted some research at Rhodes on rape and sexual harassment and found that it had increased since the 1980s.²⁷⁰ A 5% sample of Rhodes women was interviewed. Of these participants, most had indicated that they had been sexually harassed by fellow students²⁷¹ while 50% stated they did not feel safe on campus, especially at night, since many areas of campus were poorly lit. The participants expressed that they believed harassment was linked to drunkenness and “hence increased during Rag and Intervarsity”.²⁷² The students had also been asked about whether they use the Campus Protection Unit’s escort system, to which many responded that they had not been aware of it or found it inaccessible. The Campus Protection Unit’s escort system provided security for students who walked home late at night. This report demonstrates the institution’s inability at the time to put safety measures in place and make them visible to women at the university. Additionally, students expressed that the university had not put measures in place for victims of rape and harassment to report their abusers. This issue was reignited in 2016 during the #RURReferenceList protests (discussed in more detail in the conclusion). The report placed pressure on the SRC to address the issue of rape. The procedures and policies that were developed as a consequence of this report did not receive urgent attention. These statistics motivated the SRC, in alignment with its transformation agenda, to form a sexual harassment committee and rape crisis group. This demonstrates that the SRC and women students

²⁶⁸ “Are Women Safe at Rhodes”, *Rhodeo*, August 1990, p.9.

²⁶⁹ Becky Thompson, “Multiracial feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism”, *Feminist Studies*, 28,2, (September 2002), p.337.

²⁷⁰ SRC’s Women’s Group, *Report on the extent of sexual harassment at Rhodes University*, 1991, Cory Library, MS19408.

²⁷¹ SRC’s Women’s Group, *Report on the extent of sexual harassment at Rhodes University*, 1991, Cory Library, MS19408.

²⁷² SRC’s Women’s Group, *Report on the extent of sexual harassment at Rhodes University*, 1991, Cory Library MS19408. Intervarsity is an annual sporting involving a variety of universities who play various sports matches.

continued to reinforce their overlapping objectives and membership of these two student organisations.

In 1992, an ad-hoc sexual harassment committee was implemented on campus to investigate issues of sexual assault. It was only the following year that an official harassment committee was established, and the university formulated a harassment policy which “outlined the different forms of harassment and laid down procedures for dealing with individual cases”.²⁷³ The SRC wanted to be involved in the sexual harassment committee and form a rape crisis group incorporating students and campus security workers.²⁷⁴ They also wanted to form closer alliance to the National Women’s Coalition, which was an alliance group that connected women across the country from various racial, cultural and religious groups. Lastly, they wanted to “empower” women and include men in issues related to gender. A sexual harassment workshop was held at Rhodes in 1993.²⁷⁵ The university’s concerns resonated with growth in an awareness of feminism, which was in line with the national agenda; however, intersectional issues were not emphasised as a priority. The workshop resulted in some success, as an anti-harassment officer was appointed in May 1995, but the post was only implemented in 1998.²⁷⁶ The delay can be attributed to administrative procedures, which would include budgetary approvals and the appointment of posts by Human Resources. These processes were not rapid, as they followed bureaucratic procedures. The university and SRC claimed to be concerned with the issue of sexual harassment on campus; however, the appointment of the sexual harassment officer was delayed. This issue remained outstanding at Rhodes, and as will be demonstrated later, this was one of the issues that sparked the 2016 protests. Further delays were noted in the appointment of a bursaries administrator despite the urgency for this post.²⁷⁷ These two examples demonstrate the lack of action by the university in addressing these secondary issues raised by various student groups.

By 1993, conversations around transformation and gender equality were a key focus of the Rhodes SRC. The president in 1993 was Carla Tsampiras and the deputy president was Xolisa Mabhongo. The demographics in the SRC changed in the 1990s with an increase in black

²⁷³ SRC Minutes: Meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, 1993-1994, Cory Library C5, MS19097.

²⁷⁴ SRC Minutes: Meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, 1993-1994, Cory Library C5, MS19097.

²⁷⁵ SRC Minutes: Meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, 1993-1994, Cory Library C5, MS19097.

²⁷⁶ SRC Minutes: meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, 8 October 1998, Cory Library C5.

²⁷⁷ Interview with previous bursary administrator 1988-1998, 20 July 2019.

African and ‘coloured’ representatives. The SRC wanted to address the issue of HIV/AIDS, gay rights and rape on campus. Some of these concerns were synonymous with the ANC’s acknowledgement of the marginalisation of gay and lesbian citizens,²⁷⁸ as would later be demonstrated through the inclusion of gay and lesbian rights in the 1996 South African Constitution.²⁷⁹

In 1993, a militant group called Women Against Rape (WAR) was formed at Rhodes University. WAR wanted to draw students’ attention to the “pervasive” nature of sexual harassment by displaying posters on campus. The posters read “Rape on Campus: Don’t fucking believe them. When they say it doesn’t happen at Rhodes. Men will rape you at any chance they get. Rape was common last year. Why should ‘93 be different? Get Mace. Get a Gun. The raped have stopped being kind. We are WAR women. Dead men don’t rape”.²⁸⁰ This poster gives insight into the anger surrounding rape by WAR members. It suggests that WAR women wanted students on campus to act against rapists because they believed the university silenced the issue of rape on campus. WAR promoted a militant response to the issue of rape and assault on campus. This highlights the lack of successful engagement by the university and the SRC on these issues, and reflects an ongoing lack of unity on secondary student issues that were at the forefront of the 1990s. WAR demanded that better lighting on campus be provided by the university.²⁸¹ In 1994, a third women’s organisation emerged, known as the Women’s Movement. One of its main leaders was Larissa Klazinga. The objective of the Women’s Movement was to “bombard students with information on the realities of women’s oppression”.²⁸² In an interview with a member of the Women’s Movement, the “naivety” of student politics was acknowledged. They believed that with democracy, changes would be more evident in the institution. The “naivety” referred to by this member demonstrated that ‘rainbowism’ did not take gender and sexual violence into account in the emergence of a democratic South Africa.²⁸³

In the period of 1990 to 1992, many students contested the sexism within Rag and the infamous Miss Fresher event. In 1992, campaigners from various student organisations picketed outside

²⁷⁸ SRC Minutes: meetings of the Students’ Representative Council of Rhodes University, 12.2.1993 - 5.11.1994 / Students’ Representative Council, Cory Library C5.

²⁷⁹ Government Gazette, “Section 2: The Bill of Rights”, South African Constitution, August 1996, accessed from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/act108of1996s.pdf.

²⁸⁰ Unknown author, “The No Go Zones”, Rhodeo, March 1993, p.11.

²⁸¹ Unknown author, “The No Go Zones”, Rhodeo, March 1993, p.11.

²⁸² Unknown author, “The No Go Zones”, Rhodeo, March 1993, p.11.

²⁸³ Interview with Womens’ Group member 1993-1996, 12 October 2019.

the event protesting the objectification of women who had been “appraised” for their physiques rather than their intelligence or character.²⁸⁴ In 1992, a bomb had been planted outside the Rhodes Music Radio Studio as an act of protest against the sexist event. The bomb incident highlights that secondary issues of gender were at the forefront of student politics demonstrating student militancy against sexism and gender related issues. During this time, the emphasis thus shifted from national politics to secondary student issues such as gender. Student militancy surrounding gender issues was an extension of violence that was prevalent in the early 1990s throughout South Africa. An interview participant, who had been a member of SANSKO, stated that students began to feel that Miss Fresher pageants were “sexist”. He noted that despite some students’ opposition to the pageant, it continued to be held nonetheless. Additionally, he stated that Rag attempted to be more progressive through the establishment of a personality contest for men and women rather than through a beauty pageant. This demonstrates how Rag attempted to make sexism and harassment less prevalent within their fundraising events; however, safety of students was still of concern due to factors such as alcohol abuse.

Rag’s negative reputation was highlighted in 1993 when the university discovered that R10 000 worth of damage had been caused to property at an annual Rag event. Authorities had additionally shared their grievances with the university regarding the alcoholism and “debaucherous” behaviour at Rag events. The SRC had distanced itself from Rag during the 1990s. In 1993 Rag, which was under the leadership of Annabel Johnson, attempted to repair its negative image through non-alcoholic events. Rag wanted to shift its attention to community events which involved students and the community of Grahamstown. Rhodes University Student Community Organisation distanced itself from the initiative due to the abuse of alcohol linked to past Rag events.²⁸⁵ The issue of alcohol abuse associated with Rag, alongside the sexist culture it instilled, resulted in restrictions being placed on the organisation. Members would no longer be allowed to build their floats for pageant processions, and restrictions regarding alcohol would be implemented.²⁸⁶ These debates demonstrated the toxic environment that existed at Rag events, the unruly behaviour and the issue of sexual assault

²⁸⁴ Interview with SANSKO member 1989-1994 at Rhodes, 18 June 2019.

²⁸⁵ SRC Minutes: meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, 12.2.1993 - 5.11.1994 / Students' Representative Council, C5 Cory Library.

²⁸⁶ SRC Minutes: meetings of the Students' Representative Council of Rhodes University, 12.2.1993 - 5.11.1994 / Students' Representative Council, C5 Cory Library.

which would be a risk to students' safety. Rag was officially removed from the university's calendar in 1994.

In 1993, the assassination of Chris Hani, the leader of the SACP, shocked many South Africans and sparked protest at Rhodes University. In April of 1993, various student groups had protested against the police after the news of Chris Hani's death. In an interview, one participant, who was a Rhodes student in the 1990s, recalls going to the Grahamstown police station to protest against the detentions by the apartheid state and show solidarity with detainees.²⁸⁷ He stated that the protest included students from the SRC and various campus organisations. When the participant was asked about the police and university's response to the protest, he stated that the protest could continue; however, there had been no response by the university or police on the issue. While students were divided on campus-related politics, they remained unified on national issues such as unfair detentions.

In May 1993 there was a SASCO sit-in in the Vice-Chancellor's office. The students had joined in a national movement against the education crisis in South Africa.²⁸⁸ Students across South Africa protested a R48 examination fee at schools. Teachers joined the protests for wage negotiations, as there had been a 5% "freeze" on teachers' salaries. A student reporter at Rhodes had been told to meet in the admin block as "something big was going to happen". Upon his arrival, he stated that he had seen many SASCO members. At 8:45, students marched towards the Vice Principal's office. The Vice Principal, Dr Smout, left his office which was occupied by the protesting students. Shortly after, the head of the University's Campus Protection Security, David Charteris, arrived with a video camera and began to film the students. Students were angered by this and began to "obstruct" the camera with shirts and hats. This protest was a consequence of earlier action against police brutality towards students.

Students protested the videotaping verbally. Some, however, stated that they had nothing to hide and that Charteris could film them. The Vice Chancellor, Dr Henderson, and the Registrar, Dr Hunt, entered the room, followed by SANSCO's chair, Vuyo Kahla, reading the demands while Charteris continued to film. A student photographer was denied access to recording the sit-in.²⁸⁹ When the student persisted, stating that he was with *Rhodeo*, Charteris refused entry and shoved him.²⁹⁰ The demands were centred around exclusions, the need for a transformation

²⁸⁷ Interview with anonymous participant who studied at Rhodes from 1989-1995, 14 September 2019.

²⁸⁸ Unknown author, "Pushing the limits" *Rhodeo*, May 1993, p.1.

²⁸⁹ Unknown author, "Admin, Sit-ins and media", *Rhodeo*, May 1993, p.6.

²⁹⁰ Unknown author, "Admin, Sit-ins and media", *Rhodeo*, May 1993, p.6.

summit, and affirmative action at the university. Students who had written the article in *Rhodeo* reflected on the issue of how senior management treated the *Rhodeo* photographers and protestors. The article emphasised the fact that the university wanted to avoid student issues and provided photographic evidence of admin staff who prevented a student journalist from documenting the event.

The university responded by agreeing to some of the demands by SANSCO. These demands resulted in an agreement by the university to host a transformation summit which would be held on the 23 August 1993. Secondly, they agreed to setting up a committee that would “review all of the university’s names and symbols”.²⁹¹ Thirdly, they agreed to financial assistance for each financially “needy” student, which would be explored on a case-by-case basis. In addition to this, the university agreed that a SANSCO member may assist and guide students who needed financial assistance.²⁹² Fourthly, SANSCO and the administration would request further information regarding financial assistance from the Independent Development Trust, which was a support and development section of the government. Additionally, it was decided that SANSCO members and Deans, alongside the administration, would meet to discuss the exclusion of students based on their academic results. Lastly, regarding local politics, the university decided that SANSCO could ask council for the “cancelling of all representatives of white-only municipalities” until non-racial councils were implemented, and one education sector could be established.²⁹³

This protest, in the form of a sit-in, was significant for various reasons. SANSCO challenged the university administration on the issues of exclusions and bursaries. Secondly, the protest was significant because it gave SANSCO students a voice regarding student issues and the decision-making processes of the university which had previously been authoritative over the student body. The demand for affirmative action in the university allowed for a serious effort towards transformation within the university’s staffing profile, which was formerly dominated by white appointments. SANSCO felt that they achieved a “major victory” because the university agreed to the demands in writing.

Some students were resistant to the changes that were implemented. A student wrote a letter to *Rhodeo* in which they stated that they had been “outraged” by both the actions of the SRC and SANSCO. Some students wanted the SRC or SANSCO to present a mandate to the student

²⁹¹ Unknown author, “Admin, Sit-ins and media”, *Rhodeo*, May 1993, p.7.

²⁹² Unknown author, “Admin, Sit-ins and media”, *Rhodeo*, May 1993, p.7.

²⁹³ Unknown author, “Admin, Sit-ins and media”, *Rhodeo*, May 1993, p.7.

body before making demands to the university. The demands made by the SRC and SANSCO were focused on assisting students who were most directly disadvantaged by the apartheid regime. The outraged student stated that “we come to Rhodes because it’s one of the few universities that haven’t dropped their standards to the extent that the paper which exams are written on is worth more than the resultant degree in the eyes of the rest of the world”.²⁹⁴ This comment demonstrates the blatant complicity with the past regime and the lack of consideration for transformation and active change within the university. It reflects the ongoing issue of white students who resisted change and were hesitant to relinquish their elitist privilege. Additionally, it demonstrated the tensions between the student body and the new collaborative SRC.

In February 1994, lectures at Rhodes University were cancelled due to student protests. Students acted against residences with colonial names such as Piet Retief residence, Thomas Pringle and Walker residence and renamed them to Oliver Tambo, Chris Hani and Solomon Mahlangu. The students spray painted these names of struggle leaders on the respective residences; however, administration hurriedly removed the names.²⁹⁵ One warden at the time notes the act of spray painting; however, did not recall any further protest.²⁹⁶ The act of renaming the residences with spray paint demonstrates the rejection of colonialism at the university. This is one of the few student actions in 1994 as students were anticipating democratic change with the April elections.

In 1996, students protested against the financial aid office at the university. According to one participant, who had been a staff member at the time, the Financial Aid Committee ensured that no applicant was unfairly treated.²⁹⁷ The majority of students were not recipients of student funding and were apathetic since this issue did not directly affect them. The office of financial aid reported to the Dean of Students in the 1990s and students directed their concerns to him. Students were dissatisfied with the Dean of Students’ demeanour towards students and student affairs. Numerous complaints were lodged against him which resulted in an internal investigation by the university into his character and his performance was reviewed. Students felt that the Dean of Students was antagonistic and abrupt and reported him to the Vice Chancellor. Despite the request for an intervention, SANSCO students were angered with how the university dealt with the issue of “arbitration and investigation” surrounding the Dean of Students. SANSCO students demanded his dismissal and boycotted the inauguration of the

²⁹⁴ Unknown author, “Second term”, *Rhodeo*, February 1994, p.4.

²⁹⁵ Unknown author, “Second term”, *Rhodeo*, February 1994, p.4.

²⁹⁶ Interview with a past warden and staff member at Rhodes University, 15 November 2019.

²⁹⁷ Interview with a past warden and staff member at Rhodes University, 15 November 2019.

new Vice Chancellor David Woods, because their demands were not met. Students felt that the Dean of Students' was protected by the Vice-Chancellor. In a press statement, SANSCO stated that supporting the inauguration "legitimised Wood's evil and malicious actions".²⁹⁸ SANSCO was doubtful that Woods was "committed to transformation of the institution" and accused him of imposing his power over the administration. One staff member recalls his experience surrounding the event and the lack of communication between various parts of the administration. He stated that "when there is a breakdown of communication between the Vice-Chancellor and the Dean of Students, students and other administration flourished in mongering and rumours."²⁹⁹ This issue demonstrates the inability of communication and consultation amongst staff and the student body. Under new leadership, suspicions surrounding a lack of transformation persisted and some student groups, such as SANSCO and PASO, were critical of the euphoria during the transitory era. Students felt that the university had favoured staff over the interests of students. According to a staff member at the time, the administration had met SANSCO, but without the Dean of Students and "appeased (sic)" students by launching an investigation into the Dean of Students' character and his ability to carry out his duties. The university had later apologised to the Dean of Students through the release of a press statement which was published. According to the letter written by the Registrar at the time, Dr Stephen Fourie, students had failed to "come forward with facts to substantiate any complaints" against the Dean of Students.³⁰⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the process of transition in South Africa towards democracy in the 1990s. The emergence of international pressures during this period of transition forced the South African government to review the education system in order to have qualified citizens who could participate in the new economic order. However, the government failed to create support structures to alleviate the burden of past inequalities and student protests emerged as a consequence. Within this broader politics of transition, the chapter located and examined the changing politics of student protest at Rhodes University during the 1990s. Student organisations were not unified in their politics and were divided on ideological and political viewpoints. Protests, nevertheless, emerged concerning both national and institutional issues that students wanted addressed. Protests were less prevalent than in the 1980s due to the

²⁹⁸ Unknown author, "Motara allegations", *Activate*, April 1996, p.5.

²⁹⁹ Interview with a member of staff 1993-1996 at Rhodes University, 20 May, 2019.

³⁰⁰ Letter to Dr Motara from Dr Steve Fourie, 20 August 1996.

euphoria and anticipation for change brought by democracy. Some student organisations were sceptical of the transition and placed pressures on the university to address gender issues and sexual assault. However, the oppressions of marginalised groups were not addressed in these attempts, and the concerns were largely with the issues raised by white women, hence demonstrating the slow transformation of the university. Students affiliated to SANSCO attempted to narrow the bridge between an apartheid education and a historically white institution through revised admission policies. The burden of finances and oppression persisted in a deeply colonial environment and these issues would re-emerge in 2015/2016 under the #FeesMustFall and #RURreferenceList Protests.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined student protest at Rhodes University from the period of 1970 until the end of the 1990s. It investigated how student protest mirrored the broader political developments in South Africa as well as the local context of Rhodes University which has generally been seen as a ‘liberal’ white university.³⁰¹ Historically white universities under apartheid were divided into English-language and Afrikaans-language universities. In theory, it is assumed that the main dividing point was not necessarily language, but rather their levels of support for the apartheid state. It is also assumed that English-language universities were against the state; however, they relied on state subsidies to ensure their financial survival, and thus remained relatively complicit.³⁰² But in practice, English-language universities did not in effect offer any radical critique of apartheid. Evidence from this thesis demonstrated that they were generally complacent, and paternalistic in their dealings with students that wanted radical change. The same institutions did not work hard enough to break the barriers of apartheid – and their institutional cultures remained untransformed. The SRC leadership of Rhodes University, for instance, remained white. Black, ‘coloured’ and Indian students required a permit for enrolment at historically white universities. Upon their arrival many students did not feel welcome at Rhodes University, as these institutions were inherently white in their institutional culture.

In the 1970s, protests were sparse due to the majority of the student body being white and conservative.³⁰³ A few significant protests emerged, namely the Quad Squat and Biko memorial protest; however, the vast majority of the student body did not participate, nor did the SRC actively encourage protest. This thesis has demonstrated that white students at Rhodes protested on behalf of black African, ‘coloured’ and Indian students, which diminished black students’ agency. The majority of staff responded negatively to these protests, which they believed were “unacademic”.³⁰⁴ These sentiments enhanced the complicity of the staff who reinforced state policy and attitudes.

³⁰¹ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An intellectual, political and cultural History*, (Grahamstown, 2017), p.142.

³⁰² Ian Bunting, “The Higher Education landscape under Apartheid” in *Transformation of Higher Education*, Cloete and Maasen (eds), (The Netherlands, 2006), p.37.

³⁰³ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An intellectual, political and cultural History*, (Grahamstown, 2017), p.183.

³⁰⁴ Monty Roodt, “Rhodes University: From Apartheid Vastrap to African Swing”, *African Sociological Review*, 9, 1, 2005, p.237.

In the 1980s, the university witnessed increased enrolments of black African, Indian and 'coloured' students who found themselves in an institution where representation for black students was non-existent.³⁰⁵ At this time, heightened state repression saw the escalation of resistance in various ways, including student protests. At Rhodes University, the BSM emerged as a radical student organisation. This was possible because of the slight increase in the numbers of black students and the rise of numerous political activist movements in the communities they came from.³⁰⁶ This thesis has argued that the BSM was significant for numerous reasons: firstly, because they sought to represent and address the issues of black students while also responding to popular politics in South Africa and secondly, because they challenged the institution to make efforts towards transformation. In addition, the BSM gained legitimacy to influence policy changes at the university.

In the 1990s, the struggle for democratic politics dominated the nation and this impacted on the nature of student affairs. At Rhodes University, an inclusive SRC was elected and adopted a collaborative and consultative approach.³⁰⁷ Secondary, issues which were previously neglected, such as gender and access, dominated the SRC's agenda. The academic point system for university entrance was contentious issue on campus, which in the 1990s was successfully addressed by the SRC. They worked closely with the university to allow academically-promising, previously-disadvantaged students into Rhodes. Secondary movements also challenged the issue of gender and rape at the university. These organisations, however, failed to incorporate intersectionality. This thesis has argued that the university only transformed at a superficial level, failing to acknowledge intersectional issues that needed to be addressed. While student politics mirrored the broader national agenda of unity, some students remained sceptical about efforts towards collaboration under organisations such as PASO.³⁰⁸ The thesis also examined the decrease of protests at Rhodes in the mid-1990s, suggesting that it could be attributed to the euphoria of anticipated changes that democracy would bring. The scepticism of students from organisations such as PASO was on point, as issues that were prevalent in the 1990s continued to re-emerge in contemporary times.

³⁰⁵ SRC minutes Accessed from Cory Library PR4616.

³⁰⁶ SRC minutes Accessed from Cory Library PR4616.

³⁰⁷ Unknown author, "Student Organisation are forging ahead with unity", *Rhodeo*, April 1991, p.9, Accessed from Cory Library.

³⁰⁸ Newsletter of PASO (RU), "The young Africanist" folder 1,1993, co periodicals 06 11192284706, Accessed from Cory Library.

During the transition era, Rhodes University made an effort towards the increase of black enrolments alongside the new democratic government. Despite these efforts, the issues of fees, access and institutional culture were neglected. This thesis examined the past in an attempt to understand the fact that inequalities are still apparent in a post-apartheid landscape. While the SRC in the 1990s worked in collaboration with the university to increase the number of black enrolments of the university, few measures were implemented to ensure that black African, 'coloured' and Indian students felt welcome at Rhodes. Many black African, 'coloured' and Indian students feel alienated in contemporary historically white universities.

In 2015 and 2016, students from various institutions began to reimagine the functioning of the university and rejected the dominant ideologies of neoliberalism, managerialism and commodification.³⁰⁹ This was done through the #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall and, at Rhodes University, the #RURferenceList protests. Historically black universities (HBUs), such as the University of Fort Hare and Walter Sisulu University, had numerous fee protests over various decades. It was only after the most privileged universities "joined the calls for reforms of the fee system, that the mainstream narrative of the country became interested in the cause".³¹⁰ The protests of 2015 and 2016 were compared by scholars to the Soweto Uprising of 1976 which challenged the system of Bantu education and created a sense of solidarity and consciousness amongst black students.³¹¹ The students in 1976 and in 2015 fought for the improvement of the conditions of higher education. Furthermore, students in 1976 began to challenge apartheid education which put black south African students at an educational disadvantage. Similarly, this issue manifested itself in the call for decolonisation. Students highlighted the issues of fees, access to resources, and language of instruction.³¹² At Rhodes University, under the #RURferenceList protests, students highlighted the issue of gender-based violence and rape on campus.³¹³ Ideologically, the students were inspired by scholars such as Fanon and Biko who were rooted in black consciousness and anti-colonialist ideologies

³⁰⁹ Gillian Godsell and Rekgotsofetse Chikane, "The Roots of the Revolution" in *Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa*, Susan Booysen (ed), (Johannesburg, 2001), p.55.

³¹⁰ Rekgotsofetse Chikane, *Breaking A Rainbow, Building A Nation - The Politics Behind #MustFall Movements*, (South Africa, 2018), p.7.

³¹¹ Leigh Ann Naidoo, "Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, The rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015", in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg, 2016), p.181.

³¹² Unknown author, "BSM challenges Rhodes admin to follow UCT's Lead and review its admissions policy", *Rhodeo*, March 1990, p.5, Cory Library, C5.

³¹³ Leigh Ann Naidoo, "Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, The rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015", in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.183.

whilst also embracing intersectionality.³¹⁴ Sexism at Rhodes university has been highlighted in this thesis through the discussion of Rag which was challenged by the BSM in the 1980s. This unresolved issue continued and was highlighted once again through the #RURReferenceList protests. Ideological solidarity amongst political and non-political student organisations was one factor that differentiated the 2015 and 2016 protests from earlier student action.

During #FeesMustFall,³¹⁵ students protested from the University of Johannesburg and the University of the Witwatersrand to Luthuli House, which is the headquarters of the ANC. They delivered a memorandum to the ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe. Students demanded that the Secretary General address the crowd at the same level as the students and not from the “mobile stage”.³¹⁶ One student leader demanded that Mantashe sit in the road with the protestors. One of the student leaders “redirected the energies and focused on three memorandum points”.³¹⁷ They demanded that funds must immediately be released and that a 0% fee increase be ensured. This was to be done without universities imposing “austerity measures”.³¹⁸ Secondly, they demanded that a plan of action be put forward by the government to “realise free, quality higher education”.³¹⁹ Thirdly, the ANC government was to provide the resources to “end the outsourcing of workers immediately at institutions of higher learning”.³²⁰

³¹⁴ Leigh Ann Naidoo, “Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, The rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015”, in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.183

³¹⁵ In contemporary times with the rise of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, there has been a growth in academic literature that has attempted to deal with these protests. This has been achieved through works such as Booyesen’s *Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation, and Governance in South Africa* and in Jansen’s *As By Fire: The End of the South African University*. Both these texts address the period of late 2015 and early 2016, including some of the violence which occurred in the 2016 period. Chikane’s *Breaking a Rainbow, Building a Nation* situates itself as a Fallist text. Chikane argues that the idea of the “rainbow nation motif” was the “most toxic way of bringing our nation together”. This claim resonates with this thesis which has demonstrated that issues such as access, fees, institutional culture, sexism and rape are still prevalent within institutions such as Rhodes University.

³¹⁶ Leigh Ann Naidoo, “Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, the rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015”, in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.185

³¹⁷ Leigh Ann Naidoo, “Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, the rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015”, in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.185

³¹⁸ Leigh Ann Naidoo, “Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, the rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015”, in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.186

³¹⁹ Leigh Ann Naidoo, “Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, the rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015”, in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.186.

³²⁰ Leigh Ann Naidoo, “Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, the rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015”, in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.186

#RhodesMustFall highlighted the issue of colonial institutional culture at UCT. At Rhodes University, this issue came to the forefront through the 2015 Black Students' Movement³²¹, which demanded transformation through the #RhodesSoWhite campaign.³²² The 2015 Black Students' Movement was an organisation that was rooted in black consciousness ideology and protested against the colonial culture of the institution.³²³ The hashtag became popular on social media and highlighted the issue of white privilege within the university. Posters were anonymously placed throughout the campus with statements that read, "You puke all over the bathroom floor in res because you know 'Mama' or 'Sisi' will clean it up tomorrow".³²⁴ Statements like these fuelled resistance against the issue of institutional racism and white privilege on campus.³²⁵ At other institutions such as Wits, the #TransformWits campaign was launched.³²⁶ Universities such as UCT called for a 'truly African university'. This demonstrates firstly that various campuses demanded the acknowledgement of the issues that black students face on a daily basis. Secondly, white privilege and institutional racism are persistent in these historically white universities, demonstrating that little attempt has been made towards change. The issue of white privilege was clearly evident in the 1970s. The student representative leadership was exclusively white and the administration of the university remained complicit towards apartheid, and therefore protests were few. This complicity towards change and transformation was thus highlighted under the #RhodesMustFall movement, demonstrating that no tangible change was made post-democracy. At Rhodes University in the 1990s, there was an attempt to increase black enrolments alongside the new democratic government agenda. Despite these efforts, the issues of fees, access and institutional culture were neglected. Furthermore, the university remained untransformed with respect to gender. Rhodes' Senate and Council were still managed by men. There were only seven female senior lecturers in the whole university.³²⁷ In addition to untransformed staffing, the issue of rape and gender-based

³²¹ Leigh Ann Naidoo, "Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, the rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015", in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.186.

³²² Staff Reporter, "#Rhodessowhite: Is the Race Revolution here?", *Mail & Guardian*, March 2015, Accessed from:<https://mg.co.za/article/2015-03-18-rhodessowhite-is-the-race-revolution-here/>.

³²³ Black Student Movement, November 2015, "Solidarity to our comrades at the University of Stellenbosch", 13 November 2015, <https://m.facebook.com/blackstudentsmovement/?tsid=0.6454008660045505&source=result>.

³²⁴ Staff Reporter, "#Rhodessowhite: Is the Race Revolution here?", *Mail & Guardian*, March 2015, Accessed from:<https://mg.co.za/article/2015-03-18-rhodessowhite-is-the-race-revolution-here/>.

³²⁵ Staff Reporter, "#Rhodessowhite: Is the Race Revolution here?", *Mail & Guardian*, March 2015, Accessed from:<https://mg.co.za/article/2015-03-18-rhodessowhite-is-the-race-revolution-here/>.

³²⁶ Staff Reporter, "#Rhodessowhite: Is the Race Revolution here?", *Mail & Guardian*, March 2015, Accessed from:<https://mg.co.za/article/2015-03-18-rhodessowhite-is-the-race-revolution-here/>.

³²⁷ Vivian de Klerk Masters, Larissa Klazinga & Amy McNeill, "The habitus of the dominant: addressing rape and sexual assault at Rhodes University", *Agenda*, 21,74, 2007, p.117.

violence was also acknowledged by students. This issue was raised in the #RURReferenceListProtests. In April 2016, a Rhodes campus organisation, known as Chapter 2.12, placed posters which were alleged statements by management and university prosecutors in responses to rape cases reported on campus.³²⁸ On the 15th and 16th of April, a list of names with no context circulated on social media. It was soon discovered that these were the names of alleged rapists on campus. The alleged men were “kidnapped” from their residences and shamed in front of protesting students and were hidden by the university for their safety. On the Monday, protests against rape culture gained momentum on campus.³²⁹

The university was “taken by surprise” by these protests as they believed that the institution’s counselling centre and harassment officers were efficient in dealing with issues of rape and gender-based violence reports. Students protested that these issues were still a concern, despite a decade of the Silent Protest.³³⁰ The motto that was used for the #RURReferenceList protests was “we will not be silent” in opposition to the past silent protests which students claimed were ineffective.³³¹ These protesters noted that “the fundamental power relations underpinning rape culture and sexual violence on campus had not been overturned”.³³² As a consequence of these protests, a sexual harassment task team was implemented by the university management. It intended to be inclusive of staff, students, deans and senior management. Its terms were broad reaching, which made some students sceptical of its effectivity.³³³ Students questioned whether the approach of a task team would be an effective long-term solution to these issues in broader society.³³⁴ Students also wanted to review the qualifications of the task team before it was

³²⁸ Catriona Macleod, Werner Bohmke, Jabulile Mavuso, Kim Barker and Malvern Chiweshe, “Contesting sexual violence policies in higher education: the case of Rhodes University”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 10, 2, 2018, p.83.

³²⁹ Catriona Macleod, Werner Bohmke, Jabulile Mavuso, Kim Barker and Malvern Chiweshe, “Contesting sexual violence policies in higher education: the case of Rhodes University”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 10, 2, 2018, p.83.

³³⁰ Silent protest ran annually from 2006 excluding the year of #RURReferenceList protests. The silent protest was started to highlight rape statistics and to break the silence of survivors. Further the Silent Protest challenged the culture of silencing of rape and gender-based violence for women and non-conforming bodies.

³³¹ Catriona Macleod, Werner Bohmke, Jabulile Mavuso, Kim Barker and Malvern Chiweshe, “Contesting sexual violence policies in higher education: the case of Rhodes University”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 10, 2, 2018, p.86.

³³² Catriona Macleod, Werner Bohmke, Jabulile Mavuso, Kim Barker and Malvern Chiweshe, “Contesting sexual violence policies in higher education: the case of Rhodes University”, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 10, 2, 2018, p.86.

³³³ Sexual Violence Task Team. “We will not be silenced”: A three-pronged justice approach to sexual offences and rape culture at Rhodes University/UCKAR. Grahamstown, South Africa: Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction. 2016.

³³⁴ Activate Online, *Disrupt*, Accessed from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZqOdMhitgY&t=494s>.

implemented.³³⁵ This demonstrated that students took an active role in ensuring that the qualification and profile of the task team were relevant to successfully deal with the rape crisis. Despite efforts towards policies and support for victims of gender-based violence and rape, the demand for rapists to be removed from campus was not met.

On the 20th of April 2016, students who were part of the #RURferenceList protests blockaded Prince Alfred Street and South Street. South Street is considered a public road and students were asked by the police to remove their barricades.³³⁶ Two students, who refused to move were subsequently arrested. The students were angered by the arrests of their peers and further confronted the police, who responded by firing rubber bullets into the crowd, injuring a number of protestors. The arrested students were traumatised by this incident, and both arrested individuals continued to experience panic attacks. The Vice-Chancellor intervened and pleaded for the release of the students. Many students were angered by these events as well as the Vice-Chancellor's presence. Students perceived the Vice-Chancellor negatively as part of the management team, who were known in some instances for calling police onto the campus. The presence of police on campus also interrupted the process of dialogues surrounding rape.³³⁷ Students argued that handling of the events was problematic, as rapists were hidden on campus for the fear of their public humiliation, whilst victims were in the frontline being arrested for protesting and were criminalised.³³⁸ This also reflects the justice system in South Africa in which rape victims are criminalised in their claims against rapists because of their appearance or relationship status. It demonstrates the issue with hetero-normative patriarchal management and government structures, who are complicit with the issue of gender-based violence and rape.

These issues of gender-based violence, rape and student safety are not recent issues. As demonstrated in this thesis, women began to challenge the university on these issues in the 1990s. This was actioned through organisations such as WAR. The dissatisfaction with the university's policies on rape and gender-based violence was also present in student newspapers such as *Rhodeo*. It featured a survey conducted on campus, where women were interviewed about rape at the university and the effectivity of safety measures. These issues demonstrated that women did not feel safe on campus and that some endured experiences of harassment while

³³⁵ Catriona Macleod, Werner Bohmke, Jabulile Mavuso, Kim Barker and Malvern Chiweshe, "Contesting sexual violence policies in higher education: the case of Rhodes University", *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 10, 2, 2018, p.86.

³³⁶ Activate Online, *Disrupt*, Accessed from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZqQdMhitgY&t=494s>.

³³⁷ Activate Online, *Disrupt*, Accessed from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZqQdMhitgY&t=494s>.

³³⁸ Activate Online, *Disrupt*, Accessed from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZqQdMhitgY&t=494s>.

the university did little to combat the issue.³³⁹ Women placed pressure on the university through their SRC to set up a Crisis Centre.³⁴⁰ It was only in the late 1990s that a harassment officer was officially appointed. The slow pace to deal with rape and gender-based violence led to the resurgence of these issues in the contemporary, indicative of the deep colonial and patriarchal environment at the university.

Gender issues continued to remain prevalent during the #FeesMustFall protests. An issue that students noted during #FeesMustFall was that men dominated leadership positions while women were expected to adopt a supportive role.³⁴¹ Another issue within the movement was the fact that women were confronted by men who were in favour of #FeesMustFall, however, had sexually assaulted or abused them.³⁴² The lack of intersectionality within this movement at Rhodes similarly mirrored issues within women's organisations at the university during the 1990s. These organisations, whilst being concerned with the issue's women faced, failed to acknowledge the double oppression that black women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community faced. In addition, both contemporary and past movements did not take into account marginalised groups who experience numerous oppressions which are not exclusive to race. This demonstrates that even in the present much is to be done in terms of transformation and equality within the university.

This thesis has demonstrated that protests during the period of the 1970s until the present drew attention to numerous issues that students experience within higher education institutions. There is so much to be done in terms of transformation and decolonisation. This thesis has highlighted that the democratic transition has failed the youth, who still continue to experience remnants of the oppression faced by their parents under apartheid. Outcomes such as this raise questions to the legitimacy of democracy within an African context. Furthermore, within a patriarchal heteronormative society, black women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community experience doubled oppression in their daily lives. Until these issues are resolved, students will

³³⁹ Vivian de Klerk Masters, Larissa Klazinga & Amy McNeill, "The habitus of the dominant: addressing rape and sexual assault at Rhodes University", *Agenda*, 21,74, (2007) p.117.

³⁴⁰ Leigh Ann Naidoo, "Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, the rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015", in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.186.

³⁴¹ Leigh Ann Naidoo, "Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, the rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015", in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.187.

³⁴² Leigh Ann Naidoo, "Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa, the rise of the black-movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015", in *Students Must Rise*, Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (eds.), (Johannesburg: 2016), p.187.

continue to address these inequalities through protests. This forces a dialogue on issues that make complicit management uncomfortable. Until there are more active efforts towards non-sexism, transformation and decolonisation, students will continue to feel alienated.

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