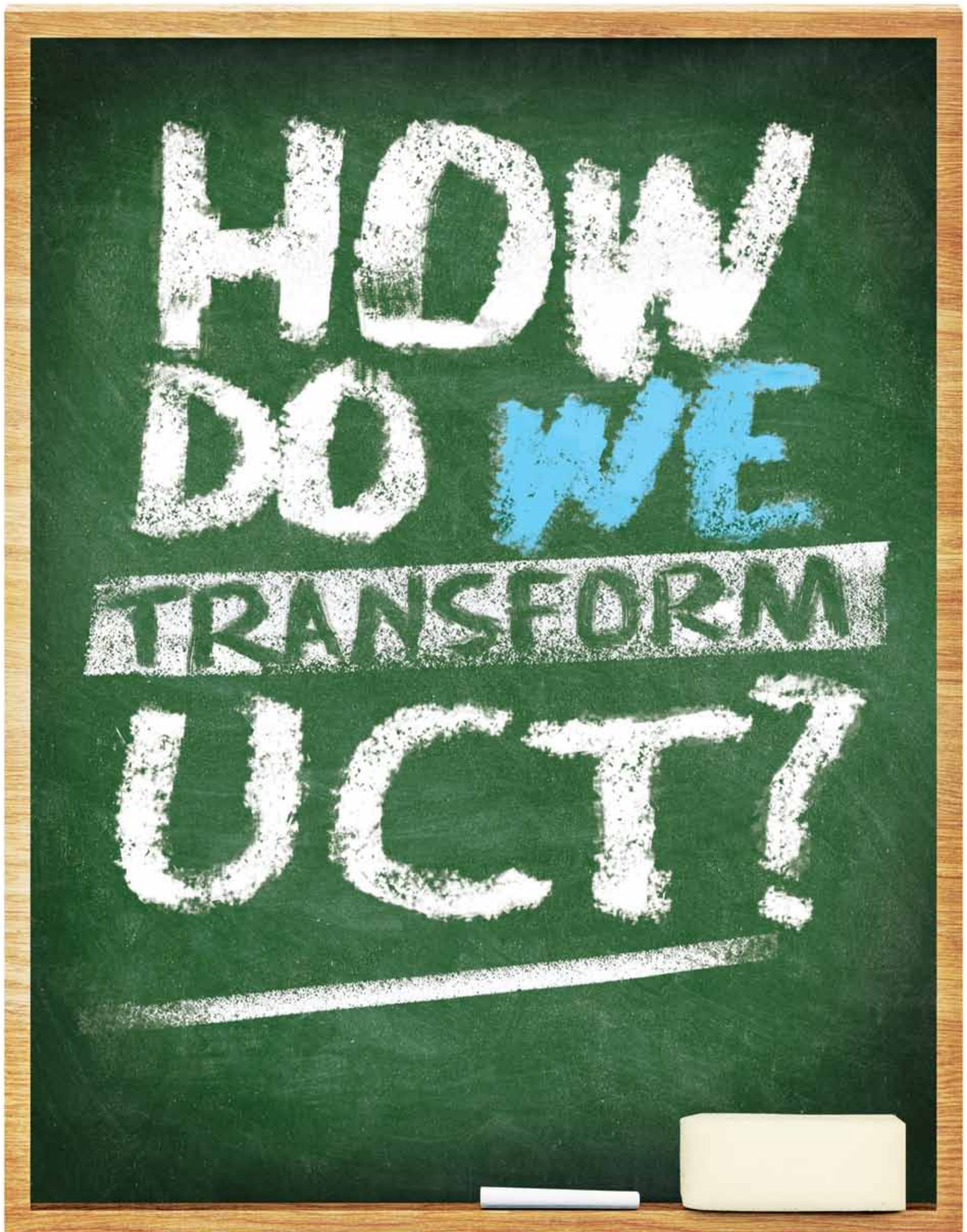


MONDAY MONTHLY

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN NEWSPAPER

MAY 2015



editorial



SHAKE THE DUST

As you're walking up the stairs passing through the centre of Bremner, towards Archie Mafeje Room, at your back is a display cabinet of chalkboard dusters. 175 of them, to be exact.

Gathered from classrooms across the university's campuses, and tagged with details of their venue of origin, these dusters are meant to stand for the 175 years between the founding of the South African College – the school that would eventually become UCT – in 1829, and the date of their collection in 2004.

These dusty objects – collected by Pippa Skotnes, Fritha Langerman and Gwen van Embden as part of a project to curate the university, and culminating in the exhibition *Curiosity CLXXV* – prompt questions about the core of the university project: knowledge.

They seem to ask: what knowledge has been chalked up, layer upon layer, on university blackboards over the years – before the advent of whiteboards and PowerPoints, but also in the era of clickers, pointers and video lectures on Vula? What knowledge has been erased?

It seemed an apt image to open our May edition of *Monday Monthly*, which makes space for the next phase of transformation discussions,

following on Rhodes' relocation in early April. Since then, a great deal of debate on campus has turned to decolonisation – what does it mean to decolonise knowledge, the curriculum, ourselves or the university, and how is it done? We've tried to cover as many of these public debates on campus as possible, and also gone out in search of additional opinions.

Questions of what an African knowledge project looks like leads into our next feature – a profile of postgraduate research from Africa and about Africa, curated in time for Africa Day.

Finally, we close the May edition with the first in a more human-centred series. Through it, we hope to get to know the people of UCT a little better – not just for what they do, but also for who they are. We hope it has a similar effect on you.

Thinking about chalky remains, the changing nature of what we know (or think we know), and how the people around us shape how we think of ourselves, we leave you with May's edition.

May it gather no dust.

The Newsroom Team

What does decolonisation look like?

Pulling this edition of *Monday Monthly* together, with its focus on the current decolonisation debate, we hit a snag: how do you visualise decolonisation? What does transformation of a university look like?

We needed strong visuals that weren't just of recent panels, seminars and discussions debating transformation and decolonisation but addressed the topic much more directly. We began looking for people connected to UCT whose medium of expression takes physical form – artists and performance artists – to see if we could find work that in itself would contribute to the debate (not just decorate it).

We've tried to collect a few examples that do this, while being aware that art is open to interpretation, and who's doing the looking matters a great deal – as shown by the variety of responses to Brett Murray's *The Spear* or (much closer to home) Willie Bester's tribute to Saartjie Baartman.

If seeing is a metaphor for understanding ("I see what you mean"), could visuals help various groups at UCT come to a shared understanding of what transformation can and should look like? We'd welcome your ideas.



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MONDAY MONTHLY

Monday Monthly started out in 1982 as a weekly staff newsletter. Since then, it's grown into a monthly publication covering a broad variety of campus life – from research, to student initiatives, to human interest. If you have an interesting perspective on the university, or a great story to tell (whether in words, pictures or any other medium), mail us at newsdesk@uct.ac.za. If you're looking to advertise in the classifieds, or subscribe to our mailing list, drop us a line at Ads-MondayPaper@uct.ac.za. For general information, contact Sharifa Martin at 021 650 5816.

Manager, Newsroom and Publications: Chris Mitchell

Head, Newsroom and Publications: Judith Browne

Writers: Helen Swingler, Yusuf Omar, Abigail Calata, Natalie Simon

Photographers: Michael Hammond, Lisa Burnell

Designer: Sean Robertson

Proofreader: Dave Buchanan

HOW DO WE DECOLONISE UCT?

Following the removal of the Rhodes statue, a great deal of debate on campus has been focused on decolonising the university. Various commentators (students, staff as well as academics from other institutions) have used a number of platforms to grapple with questions such as what decolonisation means for a university in Africa, and where the process must begin – or if it has already begun.



Sethembile Msezane, a current Master of Fine Arts candidate at UCT, performs identity in public spaces, typically connected to South African public holidays. This photo, taken on Heritage Day in 2013, seems to set up a conversation between what it means to be a Zulu woman, living in Cape Town, and the statue of Louis Botha, which stands outside Parliament, between historic events and current issues.

Curated by Abigail Calata, Helen Swingler and Yusuf Omar

UNIVERSITIES ENMESHED IN THE FABRIC OF COLONIALISM

ASSOC PROF ZINE MAGUBANE

Van Zyl Slabbert Visiting Chair, Boston College, US

Why is it necessary that we speak not of transformation, but of decolonisation? Often these terms are used interchangeably. Although they are quite obviously interrelated, they speak of two different aspects of what must happen to the university in a postcolonial age.

Universities not only emerged in and through the colonial moment, but the disciplines (housed within them) were constituted as forms of colonial knowledge. This means the conditions of their emergence were often predicated upon a search for knowledge that was part and parcel of the colonial project.

When we talk about the decolonisation of the university, the first impulse must be one of deconstruction. That is the moment we are in now. It is the moment where we explicitly acknowledge the importance and the centrality of colonialism in the construction of the disciplines. We look seriously at the ways our theories, methods and practices are deeply implicated as colonial forms of knowledge. It must be a project of recognition – in other words, of allowing the conversation to happen. We are in a preliminary moment of decolonisation where it *can* be spoken about, since one of the main ways in which colonialism operates is to continually deny its own presence.

This space-clearing gesture of allowing the knowledge of the implication of colonialism in universities must be followed by a process of reconstruction. When one speaks of transformation it may be possible to think you can keep things as they are, and simply add in. I'll add in African studies. I'll add in gender studies. I'll add in queer theory. I'll add in women, black and queer people. Decolonisation is to fundamentally and rigorously examine the types of practices – academic, cultural and social – that have been part and parcel of why certain persons have had to be brought back into the university.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE MARGINALISED ESSENTIAL TO CURRICULUM

ASSOC PROF HARRY GARUBA

School of African and Gender Studies,
Anthropology and Linguistics

Curriculum transformation is an area that does not lend itself to the simplicity of numbers. It is easy to escape scrutiny when the focus is on matters



Kira Kemper, a graduate of the Michaelis Master of Fine Arts programme, softens the edges of symbols of colonial rule (like statues, heraldry, and architectural motifs) with fabric, and then places or performs in these 'soft symbols' in public spaces. In this way, she brings history down onto the street, encouraging people to actively engage with symbols of the past, and consider and question their place in the present. This piece, Fancy Frolic in the Company's Garden, formed part of her master's exam in 2013.



As part of the 2013 Infecting the City, a public arts festival curated by UCT's Jay Pather, Kira Kemper 'camped out' the figure of Cecil John Rhodes in the Company's Garden in silk and velvet (and had him holding a fancy party hat) - providing a humorous alternative to the real object.

that can be represented in numbers, such as the number of black and white professors at a university.

But anyone who knows anything about postcolonial societies and their histories will know about the curricular changes that happened in the 1960s. Others will know about those that occurred in Europe and North America from the 1980s onwards, because of the huge migrations that changed the face of many Western countries and resulted in the multiculturalist movement.

These two historical moments were accompanied by conversations and debates about what, say, a decolonised curriculum would look like in Africa or Asia, and what a multicultural curriculum would look like in the West.

In South Africa, therefore, we do not need to start at ground zero when we think of transforming curricula. We should learn the lessons left to us by those earlier debates and the new curricula practices they set in motion.

But let us take the experts out at this point and remind ourselves that, at a basic level, a curriculum is simply a way of assigning value, a way of discriminating between what we think is important and valuable and what isn't.

In addition to assigning value, a curriculum determines the academic formation of a new generation. That is, it helps to create people who think in a particular way about particular subjects and talk about them in a particular language and idiom. This is what makes the curriculum a particularly good place to plant the seeds of transformation.

How, therefore, should we think about curriculum in the context of higher education in South Africa today? The first step is to recognise the cultural and scientific production – the knowledge – of previously disadvantaged groups of people. This is not a new proposition – recognising and according value to the previously disadvantaged is what was supposed to have happened politically in 1994. This now has to happen in universities too.

It would not only be presumptuous, but impossible for me to describe in fine detail how this should be done in each discipline. Yet it is possible to reiterate the principles that should inform and guide this process, and the points that the specialists need to keep in mind.

In your own discipline, you may first want to adopt a content-driven additive approach and expand the curriculum already in place. Or you may want to adopt the different approach of considering how the object of study itself is constituted, what tools are used to study it, and what concepts are used to frame it.

[The second approach is valuable] because analytical tools and concepts may marginalise some students and privilege others. This kind of approach will not only supplement simple additions to the content of the curriculum; it will lead to a rethinking of the theories and methods that underlie the framing of the curriculum.

Borrowing a term from music, the Palestinian theorist Edward Said suggested that the way to most productively read, analyse or interpret a text is to do so contrapuntally.

Contrapuntal analysis takes into account the perspectives of both the colonised and the coloniser, their interwoven histories, their discursive entanglements – without necessarily harmonising them, or attending to one while erasing the other.

Transforming the curriculum involves contrapuntal thinking at every level; it needs a contrapuntal pedagogy that brings the knowledge of the marginalised to bear on our teaching.

A transformed curriculum is one that encourages contrapuntal thinking and pedagogy. For example, next time your philosophy professor teaches you Hegel's 'master and bondsman' and does not mention Haiti, ask him why.

This is an excerpt from Prof Harry Garuba's article 'What is an African curriculum', published in the Mail & Guardian on 17 April 2015.

A DECOLONISED CURRICULUM HAS SPACE FOR EUROPEAN DISCOURSE

RAMABINA MAHAPA
SRC President

The process of decolonisation must begin with an identification of the oppressed – who are the marginalised – at the institution. From then on, issues of curriculum must be addressed, because the curriculum gives effect to the culture at a university. One thing that perpetuates the former colonial narratives is the fact that our curriculum is not changing; and as a result, the institutional culture and our behaviour are not changing. It is important that we not only concentrate on higher education; we must go back and look at basic education, which is where the problem actually begins. For instance, in basic education there's no mention of xenophobia and very little is said about race, particularly in the sciences. By only changing the top layer of education, you are not changing those who are coming up from the bottom, which renders decolonisation an impossible task.

Other aspects that need to be considered are who's teaching a particular curriculum, what is being taught, and what knowledge is being created? These are related questions, because who's teaching influences what is being taught. Who's teaching also influences the university's decision-making processes – for example, through senate – which in turn influences who is being taught, through the admissions policy. If you only change the curriculum, who's to say that ten years down the line, because of the composition of the governance structures and academia, things won't change back to what they were before?

A principle we must allow ourselves to be guided by in curriculum change is that of inclusivity and diversity. This principle will ensure that new forms of oppression are not instituted with curriculum change. People talk of the dangers, associated with Afrikaner nationalism, but black nationalism also holds dangers, and could become a reality if we don't interrogate what is being taught through the filter of inclusivity and diversity. There is therefore certainly place for European intellectual discourse, even in a decolonised curriculum.



A piece of the 2004 work, Come to Pass by Assoc Prof Fritha Langerman (director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art) and Katherine Bull, set into the street of St George's Mall. The piece looks at Cape Town's colonial history as a mixture of archive, anecdote and fiction, and contrasts six occupations that were instrumental in the colonial evolution of Cape Town's cityscape (explorer, settler, merchant, preacher, soldier, architect) with the names and occupations of 24 'ordinary' women who were interviewed at the site in 2003. Photo by Michael Hammond

"Next time your philosophy professor teaches you Hegel's 'master and bondsman' and does not mention Haiti, ask him why."

HARRY GARUBA

FIND THE POINTS OF INTERSECTION

ALI SAYED

Postgraduate social sciences student

In the context of UCT, decolonising the university – more than just getting rid of the shackles of the past, so to speak – would also be engaging with the points of intersection [of Africa and the West]. It's not totally about getting rid of the shackles and getting rid of the past.

We'll see that there's no such thing as an exclusively African or exclusively European way of thinking or teaching. What exists is a combination of the two at points such as UCT, where they meet. So decolonising means acknowledging the intersectionality or the commonness between the two, and how each contributes to the development of both.

A perfect example would be a slave sitting with his master. For me and you, we'd see a master-slave relationship; but at the end of the day, what was happening was the exchange of ideas.

In terms of curriculum, building a curriculum that highlights those intersectionalities [is something the university can do]. For example, when teaching the slave trade, when teaching the growth of the empire, teach it from the perspective of – or make the student aware that there were – multiple interactions.

Young graduates with a lived experience of this institution are going to be in the best position to inform the people who are going to be in their position in a few years' time. The best way forward is to involve students themselves to take things forward. Of course, students also have a responsibility.

Kwame Anthony Appiah uses the term 'metropole of intersection' in his book *In My Father's House*. I see UCT as a metropole of intersection of the decolonised mindset and the colonised mindset. It speaks about masculinity, but I read it more as a political statement. So this movement of creating this exclusively 'decolonised' mindset versus the exclusively 'colonised' mindset – in his opinion, it doesn't exist. What we actually have are metropolises of intersection, and UCT is a shining example of this. So it's a nice place to be at this time!

DECOLONISATION IS NOT UNIQUE TO SOUTH AFRICA

ASSOC PROF PUMLA GQOLA

Wits University

Decolonising our universities requires mindfulness of our contexts and location in history. It requires that we confront quite directly what it means to be a university in Africa today, beyond the jargon, beyond saying things like 'a leading, world-class African university'. It requires that we interrogate the anxiety in qualifying 'African university' with 'world-class'.

We pretend that the only intellectual traditions that exist come from the European and American academies. A more historicised and attentive orientation is needed towards intellectual traditions from Latin America and the rest of Africa, where the same discussions we're having today were had in the 1960s and 1970s. These discussions led to transformed universities where you can barely recognise what the colonial academy looked like. The fact that we are having these kinds of conversations in southern Africa as though they are new, stems precisely from our inability to engage, think about, read and take on board what it means to exist in ways that mark us as decolonised, African universities.

We don't have to think of these traditions because we don't know about them. We don't know about them because the very disciplines responsible for transformation do not teach them. In a staggering display of wilful ignorance we continue to have conversations that have already been had as though we

had just discovered them. A decolonised university would allow us to understand that conversations and theorisations about decolonisation have a strong foothold in Latin America, in Native American thought and in various traditions of South Asian thought, and that they have transformed other academies on the very continent on which we find ourselves. We cannot be an African university, a world-class university, when to think about Africa is to think about South Africa.

SHEDDING THE COLONIAL CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

ASSOC PROF SUELLEN SHAY

Dean of the Centre for Higher Education Development

The calls from academics and students in the past few months for a 'decolonisation' of the curriculum are critically important. These calls insist that we discern and address ways in which colonialism insinuates itself into every aspect of our curriculum – the choices of images, metaphors, readings; and at much deeper levels, the very 'ways of knowing'.

There is another aspect of the 'decolonisation' debate which has received less attention, but which, in my view, is the most important: we seem to have forgotten that the entire curriculum structure is part of our colonial inheritance. The three-year bachelor's degree is not a universal norm. Many countries around the world – including the US and China – have a four-year undergraduate degree. Hong Kong in 2012 shed its colonial curriculum structure to align itself with China and the US. The problem

with the three-year degree in South Africa is that it makes assumptions about what it means to be prepared for university – which, if one looks at the national data on drop-out rates, are patently not true.

As Ian Scott has argued, our higher education system is failing the majority of the students in the country. It fails students by refusing to acknowledge the persistent inequalities in education – in other words, that the playing field is not level. Over the past few months we have heard anger from black students about academic development programmes and the ways in which students feel stigmatised by these courses. They are right to raise their anger, but what should its target be? We fail our students if we fail to acknowledge the articulation gap between schooling and higher education, which is profoundly exacerbated by the legacy of apartheid. We fail our students if we fail to recognise the ways in which this gap, along with other aspects of our colonially inherited system, educationally disempower a significant proportion of our students at UCT, contributing to feelings of humiliation and failure; and ultimately, unacceptable, racially differentiated academic performance.

So how do we address these concerns? Do we dismantle academic development and simply hope that our existing three-year 'colonial' curriculum will serve everyone? This would be the worst of liberal responses. Commenting on this, Scott notes that Pierre de Vos has argued elsewhere that "equality is not really about just treating people exactly the same, because that would freeze the status quo in the inequality ... equality is about the end result". Demands for a decolonised curriculum should include demands that an extended degree be 'normalised'. It is not something for a small minority of black students – it acknowledges that a significant proportion of our students (even those who have benefited from good

public schooling) are not adequately prepared for UCT, especially in the programmes requiring maths and science. In addition to addressing the articulation gap, an extended degree would allow all students to take an African language, for example, to do electives outside their major, and take courses that would broaden their perspectives and strengthen their future employability.

This is a much more radical proposal for curriculum transformation than the demands that are currently on the table at UCT, because it acknowledges that colonialism has not just insinuated itself into the curriculum content but into the very structures of the curriculum. You can add or replace one content for another – this is important – but unless the very structure of the curriculum is reformed, we may achieve very little in the end.

UCT FOR EVERYBODY

OLUMIDE OGUNMODIMU

PhD in engineering

UCT is rated higher than some European schools. I think the international community at UCT should be well represented. It's good when everybody's opinions are [represented]. I think the SRC is too focused on undergraduates. I had a friend doing research, and he needed to do work at night, but there were no Jammie shuttles. He emailed the SRC president of the time. There was not even a response. UCT is for everybody. It's not South African property alone.

I want the SRC to engage more with students, to know issues that affect all levels (undergraduate and postgraduate). I believe some students are dying in silence. They should be able to make their grievances known anonymously. Lecturers, irrespective of their race, should prioritise students' learning and assimilation, knowing that there are some students who are not so articulate and that some are not native English speakers. I believe we are all here to learn – including our lecturers.

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A recent production by the School of Dance, Routes to Roots, explored what it means to be African, through the medium of movement. Co-directed by Maxwell Xolani Rani and Lisa Wilson and choreographed by faculty members, works were performed by second-, third- and fourth-year dance students as part of the repertory requirement for their African and contemporary dance courses. Photo by Michael Hammond

POSTGRADUATES FOR AFRICA

From Benin to Burundi, more than 1 400 students from 32 countries across Africa are pursuing postgraduate research at UCT this year. The vast majority of them are working towards solving African problems.

Curated by Natalie Simon



ADAPTING AFRICAN AGRICULTURE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Nkulumo Zinyengere

PhD student, Department of Environmental and Geographical Science

ZIMBABWE

Smallholder farming provides a livelihood for around 60% of the population of Southern Africa. But while this sector is crucial to help alleviate poverty, it is also the sector most vulnerable to climate change. Zinyengere's research is focused on the development and implementation of climate-appropriate and sustainable agricultural practices in Southern Africa. His PhD project focuses on local farming strategies in five localities across Southern African (Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe) and attempts to develop farming practices tailored to highly diversified local realities.



INCREASING BREASTFEEDING RATES IN AFRICA

Kunda Mutesu-Kapembwa

MPhil student, African Paediatric Fellowship Programme

ZAMBIA

Breast milk, especially in the first six months of a baby's life, is far superior to formula milk, and critical for pre-term infants: it helps develop babies' cognitive, immunological and nutritional functions, among others. In Africa, breastfeeding rates in the first six months of life are generally low, despite a report by the World Health Organisation noting that non-breastfed infants are at an increased risk of dying in the first year of life. Mutesu-Kapembwa's study seeks not only to quantify the proportion of mothers providing breast milk to pre-term babies at Groote Schuur Hospital, but also to explore maternal barriers to breastfeeding and identify better practices for improving the provision of expressed breast milk.



INVESTIGATING THE EMERGENCE OF DRUG-RESISTANT E.COLI BACTERIA

Ombeva Oliver Malande

MPhil student, African Paediatric Fellowship Programme

KENYA

Drug-resistant bacteria pose a serious threat to modern medicine. *Escherichia coli* (E.coli), a member of the bacteria family called the Enterobacteriaceae, is rapidly developing resistance to the strongest antibiotics currently in use. E.coli lives in the human intestine, and while its presence is harmless there, it can cause serious infection in other parts of the body. Most seriously, these bacteria can invade the blood of newborn babies and infect the brain, causing meningitis – a potentially fatal disease. While this used to be easily treatable with antibiotics, a new generation of 'streetwise' E.coli is fighting back, producing enzymes that render treatment ineffective. These bacteria then share information and genetic material with other members of the Enterobacteriaceae family, spreading resistance further. Malande's research focuses on the emergence and prevalence of drug-resistant E.coli at the Red Cross Children's Hospital in Cape Town.



PREVENTING POLLUTION IN INFORMAL CATERING

Rissa Niyobuhungiro

PhD student, Department of Chemical Engineering

RWANDA

Informal trading is a major source of provisioning for poor households across Africa, and forms a vital part of any emerging economy. However, the informal catering industry is also a high source of pollution, including solid waste and air pollution through wood fires. Niyobuhungiro's research focuses on Nyanga in Cape Town, where as in most African towns and cities, the production and sale of cooked meals is a common economic activity. Her research focuses on implementing a cleaner approach to food production, in order to prevent pollution and reduce the use of fuel-wood and its cost in this industry.



GUIDING POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE MINERALS SECTOR

Takunda Chitaka

Master's student, Department of Chemical Engineering

ZIMBABWE

The export of raw materials and import of finished goods has often been cited as one of the major failings of African economies. Mineral beneficiation – the transformation of a mineral to a more finished product with a higher sales value – has been identified as a way to promote socio-economic growth in

25.5%

A QUARTER OF AFRICAN POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AT UCT (380 OF 1485) ARE CURRENTLY STUDYING TOWARD THEIR PHD.



23%

IN 2014, THE MAJORITY OF AFRICAN POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS (341 OF 1485) WERE REGISTERED IN THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, FOLLOWED BY THE FACULTY OF COMMERCE. THE MOST POPULAR DEGREE, HOWEVER, WAS AN MSc IN ENGINEERING (108 STUDENTS).

resource-rich nations. However, policies with a focus on mineral beneficiation may come at the expense of other emerging sectors. When presented with different beneficiation alternatives, decision-makers should ideally base decisions on a systematic analysis of positive and negative impacts, known as decision-support frameworks. Chitaka's research looks at the applicability of these decision-support frameworks to ensure sustainability in policy development for mineral beneficiation.



PRESERVING AFRICA'S LANGUAGES

David Barasa

PhD student, School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics

KENYA

Ateso, spoken in parts of Uganda and Kenya, is a member of the Teso-Turkana sub-group of Eastern Nilotic languages. As part of his research, Barasa seeks to preserve Ateso through the documentation of its phonology, morphology and syntax. In addition to developing an archive of the language, Barasa is working to form a basis for comparing Ateso with other languages, and provide a description of the language that can be used by applied linguists who wish to develop educational materials to teach Ateso in schools or to foreigners.



LOWERING THE COSTS OF ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PLASTICS

Shilpa Rumjeet

Master's student, Department of Chemical Engineering

MAURITIUS

As part of the country's attempt to reduce the global emission of greenhouse gases and slow the effects of global warming, the Mauritian government intends to ban the use of petroleum plastic bags in that country. Replacing petroleum plastics with bio-based and biodegradable plastics will be an important step in reducing global carbon emissions; but while bioplastics are growing in popularity, they still cannot compete with the cheap manufacturing costs of petroleum plastics. Rumjeet's research focuses on ways in which the cost of large-scale production of bio-friendly plastics can be lowered along with minimisation of energy usage, water usage and carbon dioxide emissions.



THE PROBLEMS OF ETHICS IN GENOMIC RESEARCH

Nchangwi Syntia

Master's student, Department of Medicine

CAMEROON

Genomic research has proved a game changer in the health sciences, and there is little doubt of the potential of this field to improve global health. It is important that Africa, as the continent with the highest disease burden, joins the genomic revolution. The increase in genomic research in Africa, which includes setting up transnational biobanks and the cross-border movement of human biological samples, raises a number of ethical, legal and social issues. These include matters of informed consent, confidentiality and benefit-sharing. Syntia's research will focus on these pressing practical problems faced in human genomic research in Africa, with the hope that the results of the study will inform best practice to ensure equity, fairness and justice in genomic research.



ICT, THE SOMALI DIASPORA AND THE STABILISATION OF A FAILED STATE

Mohamed Elmi

PhD student, Department of Information Systems

SOMALIA

Somalia remains an aberration in the international state system. Embroiled in a decades-long civil war, and without any functional state apparatus, Somalia is torn between militant factions and an internationally backed but ineffective federal government. Despite this chaotic and violent political system, Somalia has been able to foster a vibrant ICT (information and communications technology) sector, comparable to that of its far more stable and wealthy East African neighbours. As part of his research, Elmi looks at how ICT is used within communities that lack a defined and legitimate state apparatus, in an attempt to identify what role these technologies can play in building a stable Somalia.

DID YOU KNOW?

The vast majority of African postgraduate students currently studying at UCT are from Zimbabwe, closely followed by students from Kenya and Nigeria.



UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POVERTY AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

Singumbe Muyeba

PhD graduate, Department of Sociology

ZAMBIA

Property ownership among the poor is widely believed to have strong potential to reduce poverty. However, the evidence for this is scarce, particularly in Southern African cities. To fill this gap, Muyeba investigated the effects of real property rights – which includes a certificate of title and urban home ownership – through two case studies: the subsidised construction of privately titled housing for poor people in Khayelitsha, Cape Town; and the private titling of public rental housing in Matero, Lusaka (Zambia). Using advanced statistical and qualitative methods, he found that having title deeds did not reduce poverty; rather that poverty in Cape Town and Lusaka is driven so strongly by factors such as unemployment that improving property rights – though essential for other reasons – makes little overall difference to the status quo.



PRODUCING VACCINES FOR AFRICA

Aleyo Chabeda

PhD student, Department of Molecular and Cell Biology

KENYA

Cervical cancer is the third most common cancer in women, most often caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). While vaccines for HPV are available, the manner in which these vaccines are developed makes them expensive, especially in an African context. The prevalence of different types of HPV is also an important factor, as vaccines are type-specific and those developed in the global north do not necessarily tackle the types of HPV predominant in Africa. There is thus a need for Africa to develop its own HPV vaccines to cater to the requirements of the continent. Chabeda's research attempts to use tobacco plants to develop a viable alternative production system for vaccines that allows for large-scale and cost-effective production.



DEVELOPING A 'LIVING' CUSTOMARY LAW IN NIGERIA'S LEGAL SYSTEM

Anthony Diala

PhD student, Department of Private Law

NIGERIA

While it is widely acknowledged that customary law puts women at a disadvantage when it comes to succession and matrimonial property issues, the reason this happens is often less well understood. In his research, Diala argues that well these hardships arise from the application of customary law, developed in agrarian settings, to a vastly different socio-economic situation – affected by urbanisation and labour migration, among other things. Diala's research asks whether Nigeria's legal framework is equipped to address this challenge. He proposes a theoretical framework for a 'living customary law', which redefines customary law as the product of norms adapted to the socio-economic changes of modern life.

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AFRICA MUST BE ENLIGHTENED FOR AFRICANS BY AFRICANS

MBALI MATANDELA

Postgrad student in the School of African & Gender Studies, Anthropology & Linguistics

The university was established as a central organ of knowledge in society. In the South African context the university was built to cultivate European ideology – to create an ‘enlightened Africa’. The idea of the ‘enlightened Africa’ was implemented using European ideas of modernity, which are capitalism, patriarchy and racism.

The time has come to enlighten Africa about itself through languages that come from Africa spoken by people who come from Africa. Currently we are at a university that still has legitimacy, although its institutional culture and its internal organisation celebrate separating knowledge and discipline and conquering the markets of knowledge production in Africa, without even being African in its own politics. UCT markets itself as an African university without understanding the complexities that come with calling itself African. The institution separates knowledge that could be in conversation with one another in the same way it separates and isolates identities that do not fit the hetero-patriarchal, white, supremacist, institutional culture.

Decolonisation is a lengthy task that can be fast-tracked. We need to unlearn certain behaviours and thoughts and shift our consciousness beyond this immediate reality so that it catches up with our imaginations. If we are still imagining ourselves in the same space, thinking the same things, then nothing is going to change. Decolonising the university requires an approach that identifies all oppression and how it’s interlinked. It requires that each individual interrogates class, race, gender, sexuality and other categories and how they work together to oppress people.

DECOLONISE THE MIND

DR ZETHU MATEBENI

Institute for Humanities in Africa (HUMA)

It would be easy to think that because we are in Africa, the decolonisation of our institution is less challenging – when in fact a lot of us within the academy are so immersed in colonial thinking that we have to consider how to deal with the internal colonialisation in terms of

how we think and write. Decolonising the mind is harder than changing the curriculum.

Social science theories prioritise colonial thinking. Not only do these theories come from the west, or north, but they think of our location in the south as underdeveloped, underprivileged, and in terms of lack. These theories are not grounding our local thinking as a priority, or even leaving space for grounded theorising. Instead, the ideal seems to always be pushing towards assimilation – to be like the West, to engage with such theoretical frameworks and their in/applicability in local contexts.

Decolonisation revolves around taking issues of social justice seriously. An understanding that the university sometimes contributes to education and knowledge injustice is the first step to thinking about how the university can be decolonised. Decolonisation should seek to take seriously social justice issues such as marginalisation, oppression, xenophobia, transphobia and homophobia, which are human rights violations that affect people within the university spaces. Decolonisation would result in a real awareness and engagement with issues in the country and the continent.

A decolonised UCT would mean that the diversity of its community does not say anything about compromised standards of the university. Rather it would point to the richness and quality of this university, the university’s contribution to the country and the continent.

I can imagine that a decolonised UCT would have a vibrant and leading African studies department; a diverse and representative student body; an academic staff profile representative of where we are; an appreciation of African and black scholars; and research agendas that engage with what is happening around and within the university, the country and the continent.

A VISION FOR A THREE-YEAR UNDERGRAD DEGREE IN AFRICAN STUDIES

PROF LUNGISILE NTSEBEZA

Centre for African Studies

The mandate of the Centre for African Studies is to promote African studies across all the faculties at UCT. When I became director I asked myself how it is possible for the centre to change UCT’s institutional culture, so that it views itself as an essential part of the continent, instead of an institution that is on the African continent by accident. A further challenge was the fact that the centre does not teach – especially when you

“What is taught is never neutral – not even in the natural sciences. We all have biases, which are also reflected in our research.”

LUNGISILE NTSEBEZA

consider that the institutional culture is seated in research and teaching, with teaching serving as a form of indoctrination. What is taught and how it is taught constitutes a university’s culture, so being denied the opportunity to teach was a serious problem.

Addressing the issue of curriculum was uppermost on my agenda, and one way of transforming the university was to develop a course centred on Africa. By introducing such a course we hope to reason with colleagues about changing their teaching habits. What they teach should relate to their geographical location and to the students they are teaching. Lecturers do not know how to teach students – they do not know or care to know, so they resort to forcing students to get to know them.

What is taught is never neutral – not even in the natural sciences. We all have biases, which are also reflected in our research. The prescribed course material is also important. The challenge for those seeking to change the curriculum is to introduce other ideas and writing. A transformed curriculum does not exclude Kant and Hegel. We must not in our attempt to transform the curriculum do away with, say, neoclassical text. It must be taught; but then it must also be exposed to African scholars who critique it. Doing away with neoclassicism when changing the curriculum is like practising boxing without a sparring partner.

My vision for the course on Africa is that it be a three-year degree that should be designed entirely around debates. The first module would revolve around the debate on teaching in Africa – in other words, the teaching of African studies in a postcolonial context. I propose that the second module should be on ancient Egypt as a cradle of civilisation. In the second year, the course would focus on African thinking on economics and politics, while in the third year we hope to foreground the importance of language on the continent. I believe in multilingualism, and view monolingualism as a relic from our colonial past. The final module would be on the political economy of Africa, which I am deeply involved with and which Archie Mafeje had a lot to say on in his writing.

I can’t see how the course can develop without input from the students. This underlines the importance of student input in the development of a transformed curriculum. Students must equip themselves intellectually

and take on their lecturers with their (alternative) ideas – that is, fight them with ideas. The university’s intellectual bankruptcy will only become apparent when students come with new ideas that convince the lecturers that what’s being offered is inadequate.

The plan is for the course to be offered for the first time in 2017, thus giving us enough time to consult widely. We want to engage in consultation that involves considered listening and the incorporation or rejection of contributions.

DECOLONISATION ESSENTIAL FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

ALEX HOTZ

Postgrad student in the Faculty of Law

We must reject this liberal idea of transformation and adopt decolonising the university as the *modus operandi* to change the institution. Decolonisation is the process of completely destroying the structure that currently exists – in other words, destroying the status quo. Transformation is working within the structure to change it, and we know that the current South African state did not come about through a revolution (destroying the status quo) and is simply perpetuating the same experiences people had before the dawn of democracy.

Decolonisation is about decolonising the physical space, the culture of the institution, the curriculum, but also changing who gets to come to the institution and who teaches us – aspects which I consider incredibly important.

As a law student I believe decolonising the law faculty goes beyond the faculty and the institution. It speaks to what the law is and how it is used within this country. We pride ourselves on having one of the best Constitutions in the world, but who deems it to be the best? How do we celebrate something in which basic rights are not fleshed out? For instance, we have the right to access housing; but not the right to access *decent* housing. These are questions we have to think about regarding the way the law is structured.

A UCT law professor once argued that the law is violent, especially in the way that black people experience it in this country and institution. The law does not represent black people, but always criminalises them. The institutional culture and symbolism in the law faculty illustrates this. When you enter the Brand van Zyl library, you are met with an image of people being imprisoned, and you don’t see a single white face among the prisoners. There’s no context, and it almost infers that ‘blackness’ is criminal. I think the process of decolonisation is critical for us to have any form of equality or justice in this country, in this institution, or in this world.

LINGUISTICS: A STUDY IN DECOLONISATION

PROFESSOR RAJEND MESTHRIE

Department of Linguistics

The way linguistics has developed since 1983 has been an example of decolonisation.

Linguistics was founded as a small department of three staff members in 1983, following the growth of linguistics internationally under the influence of Chomsky’s theory of universal grammar. At that time, the specialists in African linguistics were to be found in the Department of African Languages, with the main emphasis



As part of this year’s Infecting the City, a public arts festival, and City Walk, a community placemaking event, both staged on the streets of Cape Town, you would have found young people reading works by great African authors, dressed in outfits inspired by their country of origin. Going by the name #100AfricanReads, the project aims to foster a love of knowledge, especially about the African continent. Photos by Lisa Bunnell

on languages of Southern Africa, both Khoesan and Bantu languages. The linguistics department nevertheless soon started to focus on sociolinguistics in South Africa, producing a textbook of readings in 1995 that helped define the field.

About ten years ago, the Linguistics Section (as it then became known) realised the need to introduce specific courses in African linguistics to enhance the curriculum and provide students with a more concrete knowledge of key aspects of languages of Africa. As soon as a post became available (three years later), a specialist was sought to take over these classes. The speciality of sociolinguistics in South Africa was strengthened with an additional focus on anthropological and developmental themes.

Graduate studies in linguistics have been strengthened by the SARChI chair on Migration, Language and Social Change, and CALDI, the Centre for African Language Diversity. These have afforded funding for students from different parts of Africa. To date, the department has graduated PhDs on topics that included code-switching between Luhya, Kiswahili and English in Kenya; sociolinguistic variation in Chasu (of Kenya); the linguistics of Khoesan languages; as well as the sociolinguistics of varieties of Tsotsitaal in South Africa. Currently our PhDs work on a wide range of African languages, as well as English, Afrikaans and the sociolinguistics of multilingualism. Several MA students work on language issues facing migrants to South Africa.

Our graduate student intake is diverse, and this year at entry graduate level the proportion of (broadly) black students is 67%. At undergraduate level there has been a steady increase in black students: for linguistics it is not so much race *per se* that matters, as having students who are mother-tongue speakers of indigenous languages. We are keen to have more such students go on to major in the subject and contribute to the scholarly study and development of these languages than is the case currently, but we understand students' concerns about the marketability of their intended majors.

As far as staffing is concerned, posts are few and far between in linguistics. We have earmarked the next post specifically for a junior scholar who combines expertise in linguistics with mother-tongue knowledge of an Nguni or Sotho language.

So as a small section, linguistics has had diversity and transformation at its core for some time. All of this is embedded in a broader curriculum that emphasises linguistic commonalities of humanity, the possibility of universal grammar, and the various ways in which linguists have approached the study of language, including the new electronic-communicative revolution.

KNOWLEDGE MUST SERVE THE INTERESTS OF THE MAJORITY

DR SHOSE KESSI

Department of Psychology

Decolonising our universities is a political project. It means moving away from the type of knowledge production that has historically prioritised thinking and practices that legitimised apartheid and colonialism. Decolonisation foregrounds how what we have come to know as 'scientific knowledge' is fraught with the legacies of capitalism, racism, and patriarchy.

If we want to change the societies in which we live, address important issues such as violence and oppression, and improve the lives of the majority of people in the Global South, then we must produce the type of knowledge that serves the interests of the majority.

Decolonising the university means being critical of the so-called objectivity and neutrality of scientific projects, acknowledging that these are political projects that often serve the interests of those who are privileged in society. Decolonising the university is thus a commitment to centering the type of knowledge production that represents the



The description next to this display in Bremner – which formed part of a curated exhibition of the university, staged in 2004 by Pippa Skotnes, Fritha Langerman and Gwen van Embden – mentions how the chalkboard dusters are “symbolic of years of chalk inscriptions, countless lectures, palimpsests of bodies of knowledge and testimony to a moment of tension caught between lecturer and captive student”. They seem to prompt questions around what knowledge has been taught – and also erased – over the years. Photo by Michael Hammond

experiences and aspirations of black people.

The work on transformation that has taken place in various parts of UCT over the past 21 years has been instrumental in bringing about change, but at a very slow pace. The change in the discourse from transformation to decolonisation has marked a new and more radical process of change that must continue. Focused and sustained change in areas such as increasing the numbers of black academic staff and postgraduate students, curriculum development, setting research agendas, revisiting decision-making and governance structures are all important parts of this process.

Mainstream psychology is often accused of maintaining and reproducing systems of oppression. The 'relevance debate' in South African psychology emerged in the 1980s, given the complicity of psychologists in creating 'scientific' knowledge about the backwardness of African people through intelligence testing and other forms of psychometric testing, as well as through the pathologisation of women and LGBT people. This raised questions around its relevance as a discipline that can serve human relationships and growth.

More politicised forms of psychology have since emerged. They challenge the fundamental assumptions of the field and include feminist psychologies, postcolonial psychology, and liberation psychology. These strands of the discipline emerged mostly from Latin American, African American, and South African contexts, and are still on the margins, but need to take centre stage.

TAKE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES INTO ACCOUNT

TYLER PHILIPS

Third-year English and psychology major

Decolonising the university would mean taking greater account of the cultural perspectives of the indigenous people into the actual frameworks of the university curricula. A lot of certain disciplines are taught from a Western perspective.

I'm a psychology major, and the entire profession of psychology is pretty much Western-based. It's interesting that we're not tackling that as much as we should be, perhaps. In a clinical psychology course in third year, we address that briefly, and how some of the Western ideals of the profession may not be relevant in a non-Western country. Outside of a Western culture, some people may present with symptoms that may be dysfunctional according to Western diagnostic codes, whereas in that culture, if you look inside, it's not necessarily too abnormal. It's sort of a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances. So why should we pathologise that and send someone to a psychiatric hospital, for example?

CURRICULUM CHANGE THE STARTING POINT FOR DECOLONISATION

THATO PULE

SRC Chair: Transformation and Social Responsiveness

Decolonisation is a tool for transformation. It must start with curriculum change because the curriculum is the centre of knowledge; and as we all know, with knowledge comes power. A changed curriculum must be based on critical enquiry. We shouldn't be told what to do or think. We should come here to critically analyse the theory we get.

An integral part of changing the Eurocentric narrative in academia is to create universities that respond directly to societal needs. This is where we can look at UCT and ask, 'Does UCT respond to the needs of Khayelitsha', or 'Does UCT respond to the need for black actuaries?' By positioning the university as a nucleus where decolonisation begins through curriculum change, we can start engaging with the bigger picture of decolonising the entire country.

If decolonisation is on the national agenda, there shouldn't be any politics around it. We shouldn't be afraid to lose anything. We should be willing to give up everything and reconstruct South Africa and Africa on the basis of values African people have exhibited in the past. These values have been erased by a history that has been dictated to us through curriculum and the media.

UNBUNDLING THE COLONIAL UNIVERSITY

ASSOC PROF KATHY LUCKETT

Faculty of Humanities' Education Development Unit

UCT, like the majority of universities in the Global South, was established during the colonial era, initially to serve the needs and interests of the colonial powers and settler societies.

“The work on transformation that has taken place in various parts of UCT over the past 21 years has been instrumental in bringing about change, but at a very slow pace. The change in the discourse from transformation to decolonisation has marked a new and more radical process of change that must continue.”

SHOSE KESSI

“Transformation is not just about bringing black bodies onto white campuses. Beyond the body counting, it is the *ideas* that those bodies bring in their heads to the academy that really matters in academic institutions.”

AMINA MAMA

Following political transition, there is usually a cultural lag, particularly in institutions of civil society such as universities. Thus in postcolonial societies, the cultural hegemony of the ex-colonial powers persists – for example through the use of the colonial languages as the languages of the library, lectures and of the canon. Of course, in our case, the ‘imperialism of English’ is reinforced by its expansion as the language of globalisation.

Overcoming colonisation

The Rhodes Must Fall movement has called for the ‘decolonising’ of the university. This entails recovering the link between colonialism and modernity – remembering the violence of colonialism, the exploitation of extractive settler economies, the disfigurement of African communities and culture – all of which may be concealed by the grand narrative of development and modernisation.

Further, the modernisation narrative tends to displace responsibility for the ‘colonial wound’ onto the previously colonised – in this case black students at a historically white elite South African university – who are structurally and culturally positioned as in need of development. The problem is captured in this quote:

Development is a story with which we clothe ourselves. It is a technique for setting ... a distance between oneself and another, that is of categorising the other as a less mature version of oneself. It says to the other that here is a path which we share and on which I am ahead: “I am your future: you will become (like) me”. (Morss, 1993 cited in Webb 1996:33)

Instead, the colonised university should reflect on the extent to which it itself may be in need of development in order to properly recognise and affirm the heritages, cultures and languages of all its students.

Developing without stigmatising

The problem of setting out to ‘develop’ other people is particularly acute in education development programmes. Unfortunately, the modernising developmental state in South Africa has co-opted education development as a resource for redress and for improving institutional efficiency (measured by graduation rates, disaggregated into the old apartheid racialised group categories).

The funding and reporting requirements for education development programmes are such that only black students can be deemed in need of these, and they have to be placed in separate courses with distinct course codes.

All of this often leads to stigmatisation and resentment and is not conducive to creating a positive learning environment. I think that one issue that UCT needs to address urgently is the structure and compulsory nature of these programmes so that they don’t position some students as deficient and in need of development.

For example, in the humanities, if some students are required to take extra courses in English language proficiency and academic literacy, then those who are proficient in English should be required to learn at least communicative competence in an African language.

Decolonising the curriculum

This [curriculum reform] is a complex topic because knowledge forms are very different. For example, the subjectivity of the knower is

deliberately restrained in knowledge production in the natural and applied sciences, whereas in the humanities and social sciences, the context and social relations of knowledge production are implicated to varying degrees.

In other words, who you are does matter – and this is likely to be even more pronounced in the performing and creative arts. This means that the issue of ‘decolonising the curriculum’ is more pertinent for the south side than for the north side of campus.

However, all academics, particularly in the formative degrees, wield the power to select and pedagogise knowledge from the research field into their curricula. Lecturers are responsible for designing the curricula they teach and for assessing whether students have achieved the levels of academic performance demanded by their curricula.

When constructing a curriculum, a lecturer not only makes selections of content from their discipline, but also holds in mind an ‘imaginary student’ for whom the curriculum is intended. If we are to reform the curriculum, it is crucial to interrogate exactly who the ‘imaginary students’ are that we hold in our minds.

We need to be able to offer a curriculum that firstly recognises where we are and who our students are; that interrogates and deconstructs the colonial canon and the history of the disciplines, and that, in addition, empowers our students to hold their own in global conversations. We should begin by listening to students and engaging with their ideas, energies and imaginations on what a transformed curriculum might look like.

PUSH TRANSFORMATION FORWARD

BAME MODUNGWA

Master’s in economic development

What I understand by decolonisation in the university is that we’re trying to push forward the transformation ideal. Bringing it back to UCT, it’s about freeing the students from this system, if you can call it that. It’s about pushing forward transformation, making sure everybody feels included, everybody is heard,

and that everybody feels like they could be heard if they had something to say.

Obviously you have to start at the top, I would say, for instance, Senate and the university Council – which I had no idea about before Rhodes Must Fall – have now been brought to light; and I think it’s important that we transform from the highest point, which makes it easier to have that trickle-down effect.

It’s also important to have transformation in the faculty, because those are the faces you see when you come to school. I studied my undergrad in politics, philosophy and economics. I haven’t had a single black female lecturer in my entire career here.

From my first year in politics especially, you’d think they’d be more enlightened about our context; but I found that the curriculum focused a lot on Eurocentric concepts and theorists. It’s unfortunate, because that’s not to say that there aren’t any African philosophers or theorists or political scientists. So it’s curious to me as to why they aren’t included in the syllabus.

Looking around for places to do my master’s, I found that you actually have a better African studies department in the UK than at supposedly the best university in Africa! Why should I have to travel there to get a good education on Africa when I live in Africa? The curriculum is an important aspect.

DECOLONISING KNOWLEDGE 101

PROF AMINA MAMA

University of California, Davis

The curriculum of the university, the core business of higher education, must be taken seriously as a site for decolonisation and transformation. Some really valuable knowledges, experiments and teachings are continually ‘disappeared’ under new layers of rhetoric and endless structural changes. This means that some of the most valuable intellectual interventions get lost, fall through the cracks, or are otherwise no longer available to subsequent generations.

Transformation is not just about bringing black bodies onto white campuses. Beyond the body counting, it is the *ideas* that those bodies bring in their heads to the academy that really matters in academic institutions.

Black scholars’ and students’ exclusion experience in African universities is largely shared by their counterparts in American institutions. Here on our continent, however, we have the power of numbers. We are the majority.

African universities have been diverted from their primary mission and turned into servants of first neocolonial and now neoliberal

regimes, as has for long been discussed by people as eminent as the late Edward Said and many others.

Yet we continue to exclude our own minorities and sometimes majorities, and this lies at the heart of the failure of the intellectual decolonisation project, because the founding idea of the African university was that it would be part of a much broader decolonisation and liberation.

Western thinking is hegemonic to the extent that universities are often still organised in a manner resembling ‘the master’s house’.

While it is true that African governments have failed to maximise their universities’ contribution to postcolonial development, there are now other obstacles: Nowadays we have to reclaim both Said’s discussion of neocolonial academics and the Kampala Declaration of 1990, because both of those presume – and at the time it was true – that the authoritarian state was the major suppressor of academic freedom. The main force threatening academic freedom today is the market. So the reconfiguration of state and society is in fact very severe on universities’ service to society and as institutions accountable to the public.

Finally, what does it mean to decolonise our hearts and minds? For me, it means liberating the radical ingenuity and intellectual labour of Africa’s people. Secondly, this has to be a continuous aspect of people’s liberation. Finally, it means overcoming the epistemological hegemonies, the hierarchies of knowledge, the separation of disciplines and the Western university’s ‘classificatory’ structure.

ARE WE UNDER AUTOCRATIC RULE?

AYODELE GILBERT OGUNKOYA

Master’s in marine biology

For me, I’m a foreign student [from Nigeria], and UCT has a reputation as a global brand. It’s more than a South African brand. People clamouring for decolonisation – I’m not sure what they want to decolonise. Are we slaves? Are we under autocratic rule? Colonisation is the imposition of someone’s will on you, stopping you from doing what you want. Nobody is stopping you from doing what you want. If people want decolonisation, we should try to get everybody involved – international students, too. I think they make it about black South Africans only. It’s not ‘African’. Everybody that is employed should be employed on merit, otherwise standards might drop. And UCT has an excellent reputation – a friend of mine got offered a post with NASA when they heard he was from UCT – and we don’t want those standards to drop.



This statue of Saartjie Baartman by Willie Bester, a South African artist who often works with recycled material, has been controversial since its unveiling on campus. A number of students felt at the time, and continue to feel today, that the work repeats history, by putting the naked figure of Baartman on display again. In more recent months, students have covered up her body and head with cloth. Photo by Michael Hammond

CLASSIFIEDS

Opportunities to join the University of Cape Town

UCT is committed to the pursuit of excellence, diversity and redress. Our policy on employment equity is available at www.uct.ac.za/about/policies/eepolicy.pdf

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Lecturer/Senior Lecturer

Department of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, Closing date: 1 June 2015

Lecturer/Senior Lecturer: Structural Engineering and Materials

Department of Civil Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, Closing date: 1 June 2015

Senior Lecturer: Exercise Science

Human Biology, Faculty of Health Sciences, Closing date: 5 June 2015.

Clinical Lecturer/Senior Lecturer: Sport and Exercise Medicine

Human Biology, Faculty of Health Sciences, Closing date: 5 June 2015.

Clinical Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor: Sport and Exercise Medicine

Human Biology, Faculty of Health Sciences, Closing date: 5 June 2015.

Lecturer, Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics

Faculty of Science, Closing date: 5 June 2015.

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT POSTS (PASS) POSTS:

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Chronic Disease Initiative for Africa, Faculty of Health Sciences, Closing date: 27 May 2015

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Stellenbosch University is conducting research in social anxiety disorder (SAD) and needs 15 volunteers with SAD and 15 volunteers without SAD. SAD volunteers will need to attend 8 study visits over 9 weeks, while volunteers without SAD will need to attend 4 study visits over 1-2 weeks.

To be eligible you must: be right-handed; not be pregnant or breastfeeding; not have other psychiatric conditions other than SAD; not be on any medicines that might interfere with moclobemide (SAD volunteers); not have metal implants in the skull or diabetes. Volunteers without SAD must not have any psychiatric conditions.

If you are interested, contact the investigators:
Prof Christine Lochner (cl2@sun.ac.za; 021 938 9179)
or Dr Alex Doruyter (doruyter@sun.ac.za; 021 938 5290).

CONVERSATIONS IN COMMUNITY

This new series of interviews is about getting to know the people of UCT a little better – not just for what they do, but also for who they are. Hopefully, in its run it will not only introduce you to a few more faces, but also shed unexpected light on the ones you thought you knew. In this edition we're in conversation with Jonathan Fritz, long-time custodian of the university's gardens; most recently the heritage gardens at Welgelegen and the Irma Stern Museum.

Story by Helen Swingler
Photo by Michael Hammond



Ground work: Jonathan Fritz of the estates maintenance team has worked at UCT for over 30 years, an observer and participant in the landscape's metamorphosis.

THE CONSTANT GARDENER

Jonathan Fritz walks slowly, with the benevolent stoop of a grandfather, secateurs and soiled suede gloves behind his back, between the lavender and flowering rosemary and the heritage roses on the Welgelegen estate.

For over 30 years he's inclined himself towards the soil, bending to tend the new and vulnerable, the tender shoots and buds; a careful surgeon excising the dead and brittle – the twigs and *takkies*.

"Die tuin was vir my natural gewees," he says of his long years ministering to the landscapes that are part of Estates & Custodial Services. These include the sports grounds and the many thousands of trees on UCT's estate.

Fritz's domain extends from Welgelegen's historic gardens to the Irma Stern Museum, just down the road on middle campus.

Today, on the foot of the wind, autumn leaves tumble and rush across the gravel like eager puppies. Others float down from the crowns and boughs of pin oaks.

Fritz smiles and shakes his head. He's raked up, oh, hundreds of bags in his time. The leaves feed the compost maker on upper campus.

The change of seasons is also showing below the terraced gardens recently restored by heritage landscaper Gwen Fagan, an expert on heritage roses. Several bushes are in bloom, still heavy with their mottled pink, almost limp petals, and Fritz's secateurs clip-clip-clip at the straggly bits as he walks.

"Eintlik, pruning is wat ek goed doen."

These heritage bushes don't like severe pruning, he explains. Their appeal is in their size and natural shape.

Gardens have always been part of his family's history.

Fritz grew up in the small Retreat community that lived behind the old Sea Breeze Drive-in, erected in the 1960s. Though the other yesteryear landmark in the neighbourhood, the monument to the original Spotty Dog roadhouse remains, there is little to remind one of the drive-in – except memories of veterans like Fritz.

Here he watched feature films on the drive-in screen, elevated above "bos en lande" that stretched all the way to the site of the Blue Route Mall.

And here, among the 'sindikakies', Fritz's father, Esau Fritz, kept a flower and vegetable garden.

"My pa het my grootgemaak in 'n tuin. Ek het hom gehelp tuin maak en groente plant op onse yard: uiwe, ertjies, pampoene, tamaties, aartappels..."

His aunt kept horses. It was paradise for a young boy.

"Ons was lekker vry gewees – vry om te speel en te gaan waar jy wil."

Then came the Group Areas Act of 1950, and Fritz and his family (he's the youngest of 11 children) were moved to Council houses in Steenberg. It wasn't far, but it changed their lives.

This is where he attended school. At the age of 17, without any idea of what he wanted to do or any sense that there were career options, he started as a packer at Pick n Pay Rondebosch.

Then came a move to the naval dockyard in

Simonstown, to the cavernous workshops where fitters and turners worked, manufacturing ship parts and reconditioning the giant propellers of warships and frigates.

"Dit was lekker werk – somtyds swaar."

He came to UCT in 1984 as a casual in the maintenance department, until he got a permanent post in the garden maintenance team. Since then there have been other changes; the controversial outsourcing of this section of UCT's workers to one and then another company. It's a fraught part of the university's recent history that still resounds.

The landscape in this precinct of the campus has also changed; Fritz used to tend gardens around the old Proteem complex, now occupied by women's residence Graça Machel Hall.

Now, as he walks through terraced gardens at Welgelegen, there comes the sound of a male voice singing from a Kopano window, and the thud of footballs on the artificial soccer pitch below. A car drives by slowly, lost in the cul de sac.

It's a lesser-known and lesser-frequented part of the campus.

But it's a special place for Fritz.

When he started at Welgelegen years ago there was a vegetable garden on the south side, below the M3.

He explains how the house's sunken garden, previously "toegeweens van die riet", pampas grass and bulrushes, has been restored by heritage architects.

Each segment in the wagon-wheel shaped garden has been planted with bi-seasonal blue and white flowering plants to reflect UCT's colours: arum lilies, miniature agapanthus and climbing dog roses rambling on the quarter moons of the central island structure.

It's an oasis that welcomes walkers and wildlife. The arum bulbs attract nocturnal visitors: porcupines come down from Devil's Peak through a tunnel that channels the river under the highway, disturbing the earth and leaving quills in exchange.

The gardens attract squirrels by the score, guinea fowl and Egyptian geese. Fritz says that in spring the goslings fall between the roof tiles at Welgelegen and have to be rescued through thin wall and ceiling partitioning.

It's one of the many aspects of life Fritz relishes in a landscape he's tended for so long.

"Daar's vreeslik baie blare," he comments as we climb up the terraces towards the sentries of pin oaks below the paddock. On a lower level his dun-coloured metal spade has cleft the soil, marking the spot where he left off digging earlier.

The leaves, Fritz continues, are best tackled in the early mornings – he's up at four and on a taxi by five to get to campus from Mitchells Plain, where he now lives.

Retirement is five years away, and although he enjoys a game of soccer on TV (Manchester United is his team, and he was a midfielder as a youngster), he can't imagine life without the gardens.

And in autumn, the work is never done.

"My pa het my grootgemaak in 'n tuin. Ek het hom gehelp tuin maak en groente plant op onse yard: uiwe, ertjies, pampoene, tamaties, aartappels..."

JONATHAN FRITZ

If you would like to share your story, or nominate someone you know with an interesting job, hobby or life chronicle, please email Helen. Swingler@uct.ac.za or call ext 3735.