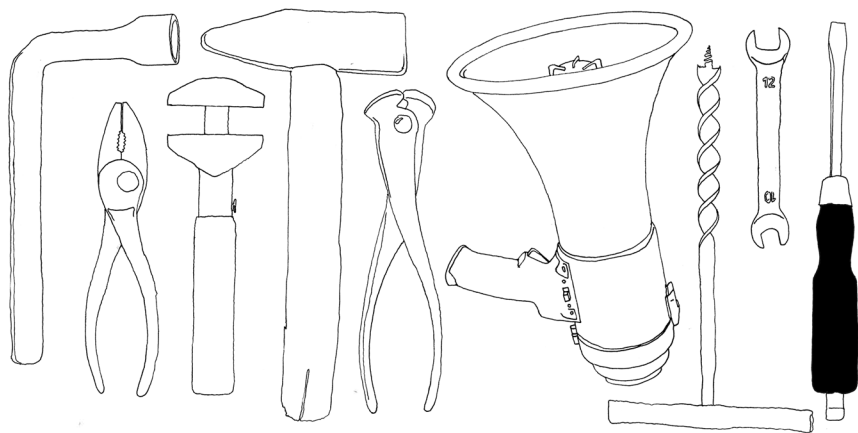


vol.ii

PATHWAYS TO FREE EDUCATION



STRATEGY & TACTICS

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Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika

Sethembile Msezane

Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika, these words seem so simple and familiar yet hold a powerful message- God bless Afrika. Sung in a number of national anthems in the continent, this not only a religious call but an awakening of Afrikans in Afrika. Ngungi Thiong'o states, "It is an ever continuing struggle [for Africans] to seize back their creative initiative in history through a real control of all the means of communal self-definition in time and space."

As the youth of South Africa we find ourselves at the crossroads of being the ideal of the post-apartheid, born free, rainbow nation and realising that this is a dream deferred. We find ourselves questioning the symbols that represent not only apartheid or colonial histories such as the Rhodes statue but also the symbols that reinforce a national identity such as a national anthem. The presence of the arts in our society is thus an influential tool that can implement change or can be misused to enforce oppressive and even silencing power structures.

Adapted from Enoch Sontonga's 1897 composition, Nkosi sikeleli Afrika became part of the national anthem in 1994 with the ideal of a 'New South Africa'. Rethinking the anthem, the youth at the university of Witwatersrand have reworded some of Enoch Sontonga's version of the anthem to speak to the difficulty of the times we find ourselves in currently. The youth question how much has really changed for black people if we are to claim the ideal of the 'New South Africa'. The limited opportunities for black youth without a tertiary education, the economic and structural difficulties of getting a degree and further securing a job thereafter has called for us to revisit the function of education in our country. Collectively through protest, songs, banners and other creative means, we are able to have accessible national conversations about the shift in awareness in our landscape. Education sits at the center of this awareness, as it is a means to defining self in relation to the society around us. It is in institutions of higher education where South African students have experienced a limited or



Photography: Nishal Robb

non-existent focus on African knowledge systems (or curriculum), therefore how are we still learning about ourselves through a European lens?

The youth of 1976 resisted and fought the Apartheid government's Bantu Education, which was an oppressive system that produced black people as labourers to service the white minority. The youth of today find themselves also demanding a quality education that is free and based on Afrikan scholarship. An education that encourages consumption and labour of black youth will no longer be accepted. The youth of today are in the process of 'seizing back their creative initiative' by realising the need for an Afrikan education that allows for creative production by writing and creating our own stories, exploring our own knowledge systems and more. Even through national tensions these times teach us that we have much to learn about ourselves as Afrikans. With this in mind, class is in session- learn, produce, grow.

Reworded Anthem

Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika

Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo,

Yizwa imithandazo yethu,

Sibe moya munye (To be united in one spirit)

Noma sekunzima emhlabeni (Even through hard times in this world)

Sihlukunyezwa kabuhlungu (When we are painfully abused)

Nkosi siph' amandla okunqoba (Lord give us strength for victory)

Silwe nosathane (To fight the devil)

Understanding the basics of the United Front Strategy with Dinga Sikwebu

Transcribed by: Maria Nanabhai Interviewed by: Brian Kamanzi

[Brian Kamanzi]: *Thanks for agreeing to meet with me. I'd just like to start us off by talking through what is your understanding of the united front as a progressive strategy?*

[Dinga Sikwebu]: Firstly, the idea of a united front has a long history within progressive organisations. There are differences in dating the genesis of the united front strategy, so I'm not going to get into that. The united front is a strategy that has been used in contexts where there is a realisation that sections of the progressive movement may be marching under different banners for different reasons. Other components of the progressive movement may think that one section is reformist and strategic estimations may also not be the same.

Secondly, organisations and movements adopt a united front strategy when they realise that to maximise impact of the progressive bloc, it is vital that they join forces. When they join forces, they do so under quite clear understanding, and that understanding is that:

- each of the organisations continue to be independent
- Secondly, that the purpose of coming together is to inflict damage on the other side, or what is called the enemy camp, and therefore the united front is action-driven
- Thirdly, underlying the strategy is an understanding that differences get validated or invalidated in the process of struggle. In the final analysis, it's praxis that will determine who's right, who's wrong.

[BK]: How relevant is the united front strategy for today's student struggles and movements?

[DS]: The first thing to note is that the united front is not reducible to a formal organisation. It's not equal to an organisation. The united front is primarily an approach to struggle. It's important to distinguish between the united front as an approach to struggles or campaigns, and what may be a formal united front organisation. And the organisational form is always, to me, secondary.

Talking concretely about the current student movement, I think there is the necessity of a united front – as a strategy and an approach to struggle - between student organisations that fall under the banner of the Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA) and student movements that fall outside of this alliance.

There may be component of the student movement that feel that the PYA is just a buffer between the state and the students. But an organisation like SASCO has, I think a constituency and this may vary from campus to campus. Therefore under these

conditions a united front that involves different student compartments is vital.

The second lesson for me is that you can't say, "Oh I want to unite you with you, minus your leaders." You can't say, "Your leaders are rotten so let's act together, but minus your leaders." People have elected those leaders or believe in those leaders, so you have to understand that at the level of consciousness of the people who are in those organisations, they think that those are the best leaders at the moment. And somehow you need to live with that.

[BK]: *But how will the united front strategy work when there are big differences between different components of the student movement?*

[DS]: When I was growing up, there was a question of: in the united front do you maintain your right to criticise? Over the years, I've come to a conclusion that what was missing in the insistence on the right to criticise was how the criticism was conducted. The Eurocentric styles within the Marxist tradition of polemicising everything and poking one in the eye can sometimes be destructive. We may have differences as comrades, but we must not forget that we're still on same side. The comrades I disagree with are not part of the enemy camp, and therefore how I criticise them must not make them feel small. Equally, my political alignment must not be raised each time I come to a meeting. If this happens, then obviously I'm not going to be comfortable with that.

Just being more concrete, if SASCO is aligned to the ANC, then that is their decision. We may have a view on that, or question what motivates people to do that. But the fact is that they've decided on that approach. What is important for a united front strategy is not their political alignment but their stance on fee increases and free education; their preparedness or unpreparedness to fight for free education. I'm not too sure about the value of saying, "but look you have alliances with the ruling party..." whenever they come into the room. Lambasting them for their political alignment is just going to drive them away. Insofar as their alignment may then undermine the campaign and the struggle that's unfolding, it is legitimate to raise questions. But to keep on questioning their bona fides is not helpful. Sometimes the vitriol that I find – instead of bringing people together, just pushes comrades apart.

We need to learn how to have what I call a comradely disagreement. Comradely disagreement is different from disagreement which releases vitriol and where the strategic objective gets lost. Handling differences in ways that lead to fragmentation undermines the basis on which we can clarify the very perspectives which we disagree on. I think we should handle our differences in a way that does not distract us from the idea of fighting together to win. If you win, however temporary the victory may be, there is a possibility of looking down the mountain after victories are won, and say, "Look, we disagreed on this but we are here now, maybe that wasn't a significant difference."

[BK]: *When we say there is a right to criticise within the united front strategy, where is*

the space where the components all come together?

[DS]: The first thing is that there must be an agreement on a minimum programme. All the components must agree to this programme and that programme would include commitment to fight for free education, definition of what we mean by free education, whatever it is; as well as agreeing on the methods of struggle. This is the minimum programme. There are lots of other areas where people don't agree. There may also be other methods which other people don't accept. Within this agreed framework, then you can say, "But comrades, you are veering off from the minimum programme." It is crucial to remember that those who embark on a united front strategy have all other big issues which they don't agree with, which we are not suspending, but are not part of the minimum programme.

So I think sometimes what happens is that those areas of no agreement get put up all the time and this causes the mixing up of "maximum programmes" of the different constituent parts, with what's in the minimum programme. So the important thing for a united front strategy is to agree on a minimum programme. What brings us together? What are the methods of struggle? How do we conduct ourselves? And there may be an agreement of how, structurally, we would deal with when people are veering off what is initially agreed. There is also nothing that stops expanding areas of agreement as we feel each other and in the course of struggle. The minimum programme is not fixed. It's just that at some point you have to agree on what is common as a basis of waging the fight and campaign.

[BK]: *In the history of struggle in this country, are there any examples of successful united strategies?*

[DS]: One must be honest, that in South Africa, there have been few successful united fronts, organisationally speaking.

There are two instructive examples of united fronts, just within our recent past in South Africa. In 1983 two fronts were formed. The one was the National Forum (NF), which was the Black Consciousness-inspired united front. And then the United Democratic Front (UDF) gets formed in August 1983.

If you look at the two, the NF required commitment to anti-capitalism and the UDF had a very minimalist approach to programme. The basis of the UDF formally was opposition to the introduction of a Tri-cameral Parliament, and to the new influx control measure which was called the Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill. Although mainly sympathetic to the ANC, the UDF did not make membership to the front conditional on acceptance of the Freedom Charter. The UDF only adopts the Freedom Charter in 1987. Until then, there was an understanding that if you insisted on the Freedom Charter, this will have excluded other people. There also may have been an understanding of the need to accommodate more liberal and moderate layers in society.



Photography: Nishal Robb

A lot can be learnt from these two examples. Firstly, the masses have the ability to transform organisations regardless of the intentions of those who formed them. Secondly, organising around concrete issues is the best way that ordinary people come into struggle. With its lofty anti-capitalist principles the NF never went anywhere. Having been started maybe to accommodate liberal organisations, as soon as the UDF got to the townships and as soon as ordinary people it took over it was a different ballgame. It became the mobilisation tool of the 1980s.

It is also important that we look at some of the liberation movements like FRELIMO. RELIMO was a front, before because of the support from Soviet Union it turned itself into a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party. The idea of a front, more than the traditional political instrument, like a party, is may be more appropriate for contexts in Africa where the making of colonialism led to unevenness and different experiences.

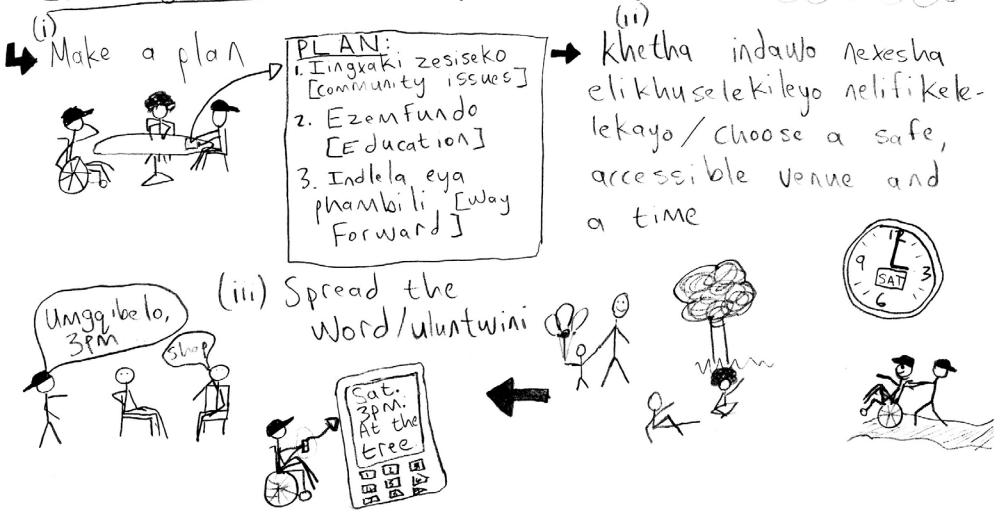
[BK]: I think the minimum programme concept is useful for this. How do those involved in a united front strategy make decisions? How do they aggregate group choice? Do they call meetings where they have an assembly of sorts? Do they vote? Do the organisations sit in a congress? When we say they have a right to criticise, where is the space where they all come together?

[DS]: The idea of a minimum programme requires a movement through consensus. The idea is that decisions are best reached through consensus. We bracket areas for further discussion; which is not an easy thing. Language is important. You may opt to call areas of disagreement, areas for further discussions; signalling that there is an intention to converge. This may be frustrating but I think it is the only method to build something sustainable; moving on areas where there is convergence while bracketing areas for further discussion. If you take the idea of the minimum programme, it may look crippling, but you build on the basis of agreements.

IMfundo kwizi xeko zethu: Indlela yoku qulhisa ulwazi nomfundo efikelelekayo [Education in our communities: How to organise and run a popular education session]

By Asher Gamedz & Julie Nxadi

1. Organisation / ulungiselelo :

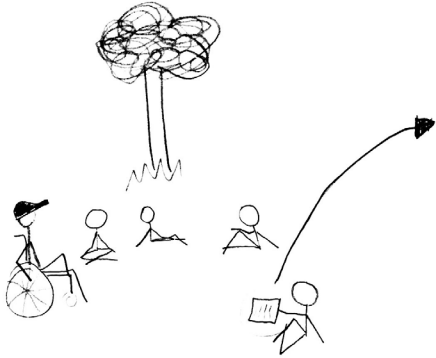


2. Running the Session :

(i) Wankelikile and introduction



(ii) Ingxoxo / discussion



1. Ziintoni ngxaki zesi zeko sethu?
- What are the issues in our community?
2. Singayaphi xasifuna imfundo phakati na ngaphandle kwe sixeko sethu?
- Where can we go for education in our community and outside?
3. What are the obstacles to accessing this education?
- Ziintoni ezinoku si sibhelisa ekafumaneni le imfundo?
4. Ingaba ulwazi dufumaneka ezikolweni pakwi yunivesithi lulu ncado ekulungiseni ingxaki zezixeko zethu?
- Does the education in the schools and universities help our community solve its issues?
5. What kind of education do we need to help our community heal and make our lives better?
- Lunjani ulwazi esi ludingayo olunoku-philisa lakhe izixeko zethu?

ii) Indlela eya phambili /
Way forward

Singalufuna na njani ulwazi esi ludingayo?

Mobilise and fight for free education for all people in the universities and colleges! Ukulwela imfundo yabantu kwi yunivesithi!



Ukulwela imfundo kwii ndawo esi sebonza kuzo!

Abolish private schools!
Phansi private education, phansi!



We can organise our own education spaces here, with people from our community / Singkho ukufundisana kwolapha esixekweni.



FORWARD TO FREE PEOPLE'S EDUCATION!

How to write a memorandum

Naturally, any form of protest has demands, Frederick Douglass writes that “Power doesn’t concede anything without demands. It never did and it never will”. The main purpose of a memorandum is to communicate and present those demands to those in positions of authority with the capacity to meet and realize them.

by Thabang Bhili *There are minimum requirements that are needed for a memorandum to be formally presented. We should aim to stick to these requirements even under those special conditions.*

- 1. Title** The title appears at the top of the document and its main purpose is to capture a concise theme of not more than two sentences that directly addresses either an abstract demand or purpose of the protest including a date e.g. Memorandum to Chamber of Commerce – 22 October 2016 or FeesMustFall and EndOutsourcing - 22/10/2016 or “Great March for Economic Freedom - 23-08-2014”. More interestingly was the one I saw titled “we demand everything”.
- 2. Who are you and why are you protesting?** This section contains a short explanation and details about the name of your organization, movement or demonstration including what is it really about and trying to achieve and advance in that particular context. It should also specify why that institution is being presented with those demands i.e. why it is responsible; clearly identifying the role that the institution has played in creation of the problem and the capacity that it has in solving that problem (s).
- 3. List demands** This section is the most important of all and takes up most of the memorandum because it contains the actual demands. The demands can be grouped together according to similarity or they can be numbered and written in sentence form and sometimes in paragraph form with more details and precise instructions.
- 4. Timelines and commitment** The institutions should either be given timelines upon which they are required to realize those demands or they should be asked to act with the necessary urgency to show commitment and respect for those who are protesting. This section can also include guidelines on how should the institutions show commitment and seriousness to realize those demands.

Chairing Meetings/ Plenaries¹

Rouen Thebus

One of the most important roles of the Chair is steering a meeting/plenary through its purpose effectively and efficiently. A good Chair will be mindful of the following basic points!

Before the Meeting

1. Be knowledgeable of the agenda. Include items brought to you by others in attendance. Decide the order and timing of the agenda, and who will introduce each one.
2. Identify which agenda items are for information, discussion or a decision.
3. Be well briefed about each item, and actions taken since the last meeting.
4. Ensure all necessary background papers and information (including the last meeting's minutes) is sent out with the agenda beforehand, where possible.
5. Check with staff that all relevant practical arrangements have been made, e.g. room layout, visual aids, etc.
6. Arrive in good time before the meeting is due to start.



¹ [http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/
resource/chairing-meetings](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/chairing-meetings)

During the Meeting

1. Start the meeting. Welcome any new members. Make any necessary introductions.
2. Receive apologies for absence.
3. Check for conflict of interests (on the items on the agenda).
4. Ensure that additions or amendments to minutes are recorded.
5. Set the scene. State the objectives of the meeting and each item.
6. Try to be brief when making a point.

Control

1. Maintain control. Set out any time limits.
2. Allow flexibility and freedom of expression.
3. Keep to the agenda.
4. Ensure quorum/consensus is present.
5. Ensure time is used effectively.
6. Ensure that proper minutes are taken.
7. Coax
8. Ensure full participation.
9. Draw out quieter members and discourage those who are monopolising the meeting.
10. Be prepared to highlight issues that no-one else will, and to be the one who always has to ask the awkward questions.

Compare

1. Weigh up contributions impartially.
2. All points in favour of a point should be summarised against all points not in favour.

Clarify

1. Ensure everyone understands what is being discussed.
2. Summarise.
3. Ensure that if jargon and abbreviations are used, all present understand them.
4. Ensure that decisions are recorded, together with who is going to implement them. It can be useful to record decisions visually so everyone present is aware.

Decision Making

1. Ensure that decisions are taken in the context of the organisations strategy and that they are recorded, together with who is going to implement them.

Guide

1. Remember that above all, you are there to guide the meeting.
2. Steer participants to work harmoniously and purposefully as a team.
3. Keep an eye on time.

At the End of the Meeting

1. Summarise decisions taken and action points to be followed up e.g. who's responsible, by when.
2. Agree a date for the next meeting
3. Agree what special items will be put on the agenda of the next meeting and what work needs to be done, by whom etc.
4. Ensure that the minutes are written up, checked by the Chair and sent out in good time.

-RT

Lessons on organising with High Schools

in conversation with Noncedo Madubedube and Nishal Kotecha Robb

Interviewer: Nyiko Maroleni · Photograph: Equal Education

[NYIKO] What are some of the biggest obstacles you have faced with working with a respective high school's teaching staff when seeking to engage on the social issues high school learners face?

[NISHAL + NONCEDO] One of the main challenges we have faced in organising with learners is that principals and teachers tend to fear that the aim of this work is to embarrass or expose them.

At times this intersects with socially conservative views held by some principals – eg. many principals condone corporal punishment or implement official and unofficial policies that exclude pregnant learners from school. When EE members run campaigns on school-level issues like these, it tends to bring conflict between learners and the school management. Like a trade union, any youth movement or mass democratic organisation worth its salt needs to be able to protect its members from victimisation they may face as a result of their political work, or it risks losing membership and dying.

[NYIKO] How do you get teachers and principals to provide support to learners when seeking solutions to social injustices?

[NISHAL + NONCEDO] Our members understand that so many issues that affect them as learners – overcrowded classrooms, unsafe schools, poor sanitation, lack of proper funding for no-fee schools – also affect their teachers as working people. This potential for a powerful solidarity between learners and their teachers and principals forms a key part of EE members' strategic thinking.

But at the end of the day, principals and most teachers are employed by provincial education departments, and this places serious limits on how much support we can rely on from them. Some are also opposed to organising independent of the control of the COSAS-SADTU-ANC bloc, and this has proven a difficult dynamic on occasions.

In the end, the success of our campaigns always comes from learner members' capacity to explain their campaign actions and to mobilise the support of their peers and communities. When teachers and principals see that our members know how to conscientise and mobilise masses around the issues they face collectively, they know they have to take these learners seriously.

[NYIKO] What have you found to be most effective way of getting learner to disclose what they understand social injustices to be?

[NISHAL + NONCEDO] Learners (who mostly just go home-school-home, unlike students or workers who move more often across different spaces) sometimes don't have a clear sense of what a well-resourced school/classroom/education/community looks like. Many don't feel or understand how raw a deal South Africa is offering at the moment. One of the things that politicises learners most effectively is visiting a Westerford/Rustenberg Girls/Bishop's; things become very stark and very urgent after that.

Basic political education, engaging on the material realities of the country, is key for us. This means learners engaging one another on their desires and hopes for their communities, their schools and themselves, and then on the fact that the conditions and resources needed to achieve these things usually just don't exist. This leads to discussions on inequality, and questioning the roots and development of a situation in which wealthy and white people can live in such a different reality from the majority.

Safe organising spaces in which learners feel a sense of comfort and ownership are a key in enabling these discussions to take place.

[NYIKO] What processes have you followed, when working with learners, to finding long term solutions to social injustices?

[NISHAL + NONCEDO] The only long-term solution to our current situation is sustained, democratic organising of masses of our people. We are trying to build a movement that does this. Thousands of members are organised in branches, they elect and give mandates to representatives when decisions need to be made, and this kind of practice needs to be sustained and built up over many years if we are to achieve a new, better society in this part of the world.



In pursuing a struggle, ensure that the alliances formed do not rely on coercion, neither becoming over prescriptive and self-righteous; nor over-riding the rights of others to get “our rights”. Be mature enough to realistically evaluate consequences and realize the difference between what is desirable and what is feasible. [...] So, the struggle; founded on values leading to legitimate demands, physically manifested through organized public demonstration; must be clear about its objectives while being careful about the sway of negative emotions that could damage the image of the struggle and thus cause a loss of public support. A powerful emotion like anger, for example, is in itself not a legitimate argument upon which to justify violent, intimidating or destructive action; for destruction is never constructive. If a strategy does not yield the desired result or seem to be derailing the struggle, then re-consult and reconsider other viable options in order to avoid explosion or implosion. A bend in the road is not the end of the road, but it could become the end if we fail to take the bend.

Comments on
engaging with
communities

in dialogue with Ihsaan
Bassier

Interview Extracts: How can links between students and communities be created and strengthened to (a) broaden the struggle to ensure it is grounded in the people's voice, and (b) galvanise support.

I welcome your extremely relevant question, because one of my main critiques of the current student protests is the following: The legitimate student protests lack any links to communities and workers by way of issues and organization beyond the confines of their ivory towers. [...]

To galvanize maximum support it is essential to clearly state the cause of the struggle, consult as widely as possible, listen objectively to contending voices, consider various possible approaches and decide on the strategy that is agreed upon as being most effective. Always maintain dignity and discipline, ensuring that you are heading to a solution and not adding to the problem.
- **Shaykh Sa'dullah Khan, CEO Islamia College**



Photography: Nishal Röbb

A critical question is why for example are students not convening some of their meetings within communities such as the Mowbray Town Hall, Athlone Civic Centre or the Khayelitsha Multipurpose Centre. The Mosque sermon and the Discussion Forum by the Claremont Main Road Mosque on Friday 7 October and Wednesday 12 October respectively is a modest attempt at addressing this weakness.

**- Imam
Rashied of Claremont Main Road
Mosque**

Communicate, educate each other. Not everybody is a professor or academic and has that education. There needs to be a respect that is built up between communities and students, through that to gain trust of communities. For example, cleaning up the neighbourhood in terms of crime, or initiatives like an internet cafe for youngsters to come. Offer your services twice a week - you are not going to solve problems, you're just someone to talk to. Offer services in your own field, like finance or law or medicine. Through this, you build relationships. Then amongst your own group, evaluate situation and get a feel of community needs.

**- Masturah, community organiser for
Boorhanool Islam Movement**

Lessons on community organizing

Ebraheim Fourie from the
Housing Assembly in dialogue
with Kalila Hercules

Kalila Hercules: So, firstly thanks for agreeing to help. Can you introduce yourself and your organization?

Ebraheim Fourie: Okay, I am Ebraheim Fourie; I belong to Housing Assembly. I am currently the deputy secretary. I come from an area in Beacon Valley, which is in the Mitchells Plain district of the Housing Assembly. Our main aim is to unite all those living in bad housing conditions, whether it's a badly built RDP, in a backyard, overcrowded housing, insecure, unsafe housing. We seeking to unite all of those, in a militant campaign for decent housing for all.

KH: *That's also an explanation of the Housing Assembly and what they do?*

EF: I think there's more to what the Housing Assembly [does]. We seek to unite but then there's the nitty gritty, then there's the work- capacity building within communities... The Housing Assembly, it takes on the issue of housing but... it looks at the broader picture. It is not only just housing, we make the links between unemployment and housing, we make the links between a student and housing, because [of] our experience. Because we live in overcrowded conditions our kids drop out of school.

I live in a shack, which is six by three with seven kids, so where do the one study when it's necessary for them to study? Then the other one is a drug addict, he steals the one's books that's on school... All of those things. For the Housing Assembly it is about encouraging that self-activity... And to capacitate communities, they need to understand why these conditions, where does it come from? Who is in charge of these things? Who are we? What we are keen on doing when we are in communities, and when we run workshops, is the social pyramid {2:07}. You've got to understand who's at the bottom, who's at the top and why it is like that. It is not just uniting but I think it's capacity building.

KH: *Speaking to the recent public meeting, you spoke of the slogan "everyone an organizer"... [We're] looking to have an explanation of that practically.*

EF: That's the point that I was making- the self-activity – because we see the current problem we have with leadership, they're opportunists, they are co-opted... When we speak about everyone an organizer, we do not want that aunty sitting at home and waiting for me to come like I'm the saviour. We want everyone to be an organizer therefore they need to understand; there needs to be some kind of a politics. So, within our communities when we do the grassroots work, the door to door, we encourage

each and every- So when we do the door to door by you today and we have a chat, when I leave your house I would ask you, "Would you want to go with us to the next house, or tomorrow to the next street?" We had this Rasta that was part of our group in Tafelsig, a few years back, and he has got the mind of an eight year old. He can't read, he can't write... but he feels the struggle. What he brought to the struggle is: when we had meetings, he might not attend that meeting but would take care of all the kids... and make them a pot of maize-meal. For me, that is self-activity, you might not be in the forefront but you are part of. Once everyone feels that with the Housing Assembly, 'this is my organisation' then we are going to move. Therefore we are pushing the slogan 'everyone an organiser', whether you speak to your neighbour, whether you speak in church, on the bus- whatever it is you do that's not necessarily radical but contributes to our struggle and realising our demands for decent housing.

KH: *Yes, definitely we each have something to contribute. We need to broaden the scope of what we understand contribution to be...*

EF: ...and participation. That's the democratic participatory processes we need to build in every sphere of our struggles.

KH: *Lastly, this speaks to advice that you might give to the youth activists in schools and universities on how to engage with communities and build solidarity across struggles. I know you mentioned the need for students to use their skills...*

EF: I think for me, the politics is the advice because if I understand #FeesMustFall, and clearly understand what you guys are saying, I have to support it because [I] myself have kids. For me I would want them to have a tertiary education but me knowing now already that they're never going to have it under these conditions. I am unemployed, I will never be able to send one of them to university so matric is the highest probably we are thinking. Then after that we will probably work as labour...

I think it is the broader spectrum of politics, the struggle that we need to understand and I don't like to refer to it as solidarity because it's my struggle. I don't want to divide us more, your struggle is mine- I'm coming to my struggle. Instead of solidarity and support, it is the struggle of each and everyone. I think it is key, how do we make the links? My job within the Housing Assembly is to take complicated things like the word 'neo-liberalism' ... my job is to break that down in to laymen terms where is [the] aunty where I live gets to understand what is neo-liberalism. I pointed out sometimes, when the refuse trucks come around, then I will point out neo-liberalism for them. It's here once a week, we have extended families, we have backyarders, so that means double the amount of refuse, so why are they only coming once a week? In Constantia where people can pay for the service they will go around twice but there lives three people in that house, they eat out most of the time so there's no real refuse. It is there where we try and get each and everyone on board... That aunty needs to understand what is this thing called 'neo-liberalism', what is it that kills you, not only just your struggle with the water management device but where does it come from. What is privatisation? What is

commodification?

In the community I'm from everybody is on their way up, or on their way forward... What does that mean? Up where? Towards what? Up towards having my own house, my car, my kids, my iPad- all of these things, so it is difficult to organize within our communities because [of] what is put out there and prescribed for society, how it should work. It is huge and it is attractive... I mean I can't fight with my son if he wants Nikes of R300 or R900, how do I explain to him 'colonialism'... It's that consciousness that we need to shift but it is a matter of how. I don't think anybody has mastered it yet but I think the Housing Assembly is very close. Strategy of encouraging self-activity... [Other strategies] never emerges from people's material struggles.

People are all over, a guy mentioned there of self-help: breeding our own chickens and all of this. Self-help is an important component of capitalism, that's neo-liberalism... we not building new houses, we give you a piece of land- build your own houses. People are so desperate; they want that, not realizing you are unemployed, you might build your house this far (indicates meter above the ground) and no more. It ends up being slumps at the end of the day. I don't know, that guy wants to breed chickens; don't we want to rather seize the means of production? And produce for the nation, not for yourself. Our strategies say campaigns and I think, I have no straight answers to these things, I am very new to activism... It is five years; it is an occupation struggle that got me in to activism. That's how I got to meet the Housing Assembly and be currently involved within the Housing Assembly. I think we need to master, we really need to master, how to get organised. It is not an easy thing... I think a starting point would be self-activity.



Photography: Nishal Röbb

Community and struggles and the tactics of land occupations in conversation with Petrus Brink

Transcribed by: Catherine Harrison Interviewed by: Simon Rakei

[Petrus Brink]: Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Petrus Brink. I am a farm dweller. I live in a township along the west coast in the western cape called Citrusdal. I am a member of the Citrusdal farmworkers forum, the Citrusdal farmworkers, farm dwellers and migrants forum. I'm also a member of the food sovereignty campaign or the right to agrarian reform for food sovereignty or the FSC. So I'm living on the farm of a commercial farmer in Citrusdal and the basis of our struggle in Citrusdal as farmworkers are basically the common struggle that you have on the farms of white commercial farmers but since we are affiliated in the FSC movement and also affiliated to [la via campesina] we are not only working in the Citrusdal area in the western cape but also in other provinces and we are working with other movements in solidarity like the LPM, Mayibuye, Landless Movement and so on

[Simon Rakei]: *Ok, thanks for that brief introduction. So to our end we are working to the [pamphlet] collective. So this is the second edition and we are trying to get practical advice on strategy and tactics, specifically how to work with communities and given the recent occupation that you have we can begin by looking at 4 issues. Perhaps we can start with a bit of context as to how that occupation unfolded, why you chose to occupy at that time and what was*

the rationale for deciding to occupy at that specific moment.

[Petrus Brink]: Ja, because the movement is the right to reform for agrarian reform for food sovereignty, you see in the name it talks about agrarian reform and also it talks about food sovereignty so if we have this experience for years that we struggle with the government into the struggle to transfer land back to black people and to and we know as a result of the Glen Earl Act in the 1800s and also the Natives Land Act in 1913 many black people have been removed from the land of their ancestors. They have lost their land, they have been dispossessed and we have many marches, many acts and many conversations with government departments. We have marched so many times to Parliament and said to government the land was ... white farmers didn't buy it, they just took it and many of us lost our ... many black people have lost their lives to the fact that they .. you know, the land has been taken from them. Stolen from them. So basically 85% of the commercial or agricultural land in South Africa now belongs to white farmers. So with the engagement that we had with government, there was no will, no political will of the government as to give land back to the people and the other hand we have the white commercial farmers hanging on to the land looking at the government budget that the department of land development, rural

reform and land development has and also it becomes difficult for the state just to buy the land into the willing buyer, willing seller model of land reform. So it isn't working for us. So we've realized through our struggles also with the plan the minister [mkhonto] has the policy that states that a farm worker needs to work for 50 years on a farm and after 50 years this farmworker can be, you know, considered to have 50% of the farm. But also in the policy he has to make it clear that he or she has to be a disciplined farmworker. So you can be thinking for yourself into land reform you must work for yourself and you might work 50 years on a farm just to have, to be considered to have land. This is .. this is .. this is really not working. So the reason that we decided to occupy land is because by all means we know that the ANC government is not going to take the land from the farmers, you know this thing of assisting us if we can't buy the land. So the only way for us to get land is to occupy the land, is just to go there and, as we have done now on the 15 and the 16th we celebrated international world food sovereignty day and we occupied some land in the Citrusdal area. The land has been abandoned by the research council for more than 19 years. So we have just decided as .. we are just going to occupy the land and we bring this land under production. So we planned .. we have certain varieties, lots of varieties .. of crops that we planned [plant] there and more farmers are going to come to the land there and plant the land and use the land there as we have done in many other parts.

[Simon Rakei]: *Ok. Do you think that, into tactics or strategy, do you think that .. or rather how would you explain the effectiveness of the land occupation into either putting pressure on government or into you meeting specific objectives so what has*

this specific occupation achieved or what do you hope to achieve going forward?

[Petrus Brink]: I think that the most important part of the occupation of land and also the way we want to change poverty, we want to address poverty, we want people to have, to provide their own means of production, that they can produce their own food, local people producing their own food have the means, have control over the food that they want to produce, that they want to eat. For us it's important .. the awareness, the way we organize the people. That is maybe, critically for us. We need to organize as I have said earlier today, trying to talk about an atomic bomb, how does it work and I was trying to also talk about uranium 235 and also uranium 238, that they are simple atoms but different mass, therefore they are called isotopes. They are so very small that there are billions and billions of them on the point of a needle but if you take all these very small things together, when it explodes it becomes a mass of destruction. So what I am trying to say that the way we organize, the way we make people aware, the people outside, the masses of people we don't have on our side. So for us it's important to think about how do we organize those people, to have them, to make them aware of what we are doing, to make them aware of .. that .. if we are organized we can overthrow, this powerful state, this powerful state, this powerful police force was so brutal, I have seen them come out in the Marikana mineworkers strike, they have killed more than 34 mineworkers, they have killed 3 farmworkers during 2012, 2013 in the farmworkers strike. And they are keeping killing people, they are hassling us as I have seen feesmustfall students has been brutally treated by them. They are criminalising every form of resistance

where people just want freedom and we fight for what really belongs to us. So the only way we can .. resist and for example we have occupied the land is when we have the masses of people behind us. And for us I think important especially this day is we come together to find ways that we can link the different struggles. Like for example we are fighting for land, we are fighting for food sovereignty, on the other hand there's fees must fall. We can't say there's actually a unique struggle that has to stay in isolation. So I believe that we have to talk to our children, we have to talk to our small children, we have to take them to the meetings, we have to talk to women, every one of us, every man, every one comes from the womb of a woman so .. the women are just a central being of our existence and I think we have to organize women, we have to make sure that in all spaces where we have come together, that we talk about our struggles. When we come around on a Saturday evening when we drink a few beers, you talk about friends, you talk about other people about these things, you know. And as more people are aware and as more people are, you know aware of all these different struggles and we can connect it, if we can join the struggle you know, if we can join the events, wherever there is a collective fighting we are actually basically supposed to support each other. And that is how I believe we can through mobilization the masses, that is what we need.

[Simon Rakei]: *Ok. So this leads to my 2nd main point and you have actually started touching on it. Could you just talk us through practical steps how you organized people, how you planned for the occupation, how you got people to come together, those basic and simple and basic practical ways of moving forward to the point where you*

could have an occupation?

[Petrus Brink]: I think the first thing for us always has been to get into the minds of people, that your man in the street or the woman in the street or children, they must know that the everyday lived way of life is not necessarily the right way of life. You know. I think that there is a normal acceptance of people generally in the new liberal system, that way of life is accepted as the right way and when students come out as militant and radical, there are also those who think that these students are burning, listen also to the political leaders of the ANC, these students are burning things that they have been built. There are others who think that for example that they are barbaric. And they see us, whenever people are rising, whenever there is resistance against the system that keeps the rich in place then they see that is destabilizing the country whilst we know that the normal acceptable way of life .. it is like .. South Africa acts in a way it is like a welfare state, it is just giving you the people just some sources that you could just survive and work and work and the rich are becoming more richer and the poor are becoming more poorer. So for us it's to challenge in the minds of the people, the normal people in the street, not necessarily comrades, not necessarily the leadership but also the communities themselves. Is to challenge them themselves so that they know that for example of land is a legitimate form. It is the only form that works for us. So the first thing for us is awareness, awareness that everyone knows about it so that we can have the support. We know that at some stage, even at [], you will face resistance from the state and oppression from the state. So with the awareness it is also important to work out some strategies as to how are you going to respond when

you come at a point where you are faced with eviction that you have the necessary resources and that you have the necessary capacity to deal with, you know, when there is a need for food, when there is a need for accommodation, when there is a need to move people around from one place to another. So we have to make sure that those kinds of resources, different kinds of resources and also to make sure that we have linkages with other movements. Maybe the most important thing is that we have linkages to other movements and that there is collaboration and we also make sure that people understand the concept of food sovereignty so that at a certain stage we can share. Also sharing some of the things that are available. Obviously sometimes you can't buy everything that you need for example. If you come on the land you don't have the money, you can't buy a decent pump to get the water from the river to where you need it for the garden so somehow you also have to make sure that all the resources that you can buy, that it can be bought by stakeholders, by other organisations and things that you can't buy, it has to come from the people. Everyone comes with their seedlings and they bring what is available and also sharing food.

[Simon Rakei]: *Ok. Thirdly can we just quickly talk about some of the obstacles that you face. So I suppose in the face of land occupancy you have legal obstacles ito the law etc., like how you deal with those kinds of obstacles. Political obstacles and those kind of []. How do you overcome those challenges?*

[Petrus Brink]: [laughs] I think it's more or less the problems that you are facing. Some of the obstacles you can't predict. Some you can well predict that some people might

be arrested by the police and I think one of the organisations have particular small funds that they make available like SVP has a small fund that they make available in case someone has been arrested in such an occupation. That they can be legally represented. That is the one thing. The other thing is that you don't have to plan everything perfectly. You just move in and whatever comes, you take it as it comes. I think that unprecedented actions, this whole revolt is not something that you should plan properly, you do the things that you are capable of doing and the other things just unfold as the movement gets momentum. So that is basically what happened to us and we are supportive to families that are arrested and I remember that during the farmworkers strike we have been supportive to all the families that have been arrested and been in jail. And we make sure that sometimes if they have legal representation through other organisations they have it. The movement also makes sure, I remember one of the people that .. a mommy who's children have been left alone and then we have to make sure that we accommodate the children and make sure that they have food, make sure that they can still go to school. And we also support families that are locked up in jail. There are those things that we can plan for but the others, don't plan for it. Like a soldier you go to war, you have your rifle and your ammunition. You don't go to war with the biggest expectation that nothing is going to happen or that you must come back. You just go to fight for your country, irrespective of you stay behind and you never come back. So that applies.

[Simon Rakei]: *Ok. Last few issues – I guess you can never fully answer but I got the []. What are the short-term victories that you have gained and what are the longer term*

victories that you are working towards? And if you can also just quickly touch on how you'd connect this particular struggle with students, like how to get students involved in fees must fall for instance. To understand the struggle and the lessons that they can learn from this. Also students in a broader sense who aren't necessarily involved in protests, how would you get them involved?

[Petrus Brink]: [laughs] this is very difficult. I think some of the victories that we have is the occupation of land in several places in the western cape and the west coast, bringing land under production – farming and producing. And I think another challenge as you have asked is how to connect our struggle of land with students. I think the one or other way, there are connections. I have been a student before so I know that there are needs, the daily needs that they have too. And maybe the most fundamental need that every person needs, especially the student, is to have food every day. So I think that maybe one way of actually supporting the students is to be in the rallies, wherever they are active, to try to join them, is one way. So even though that may not be a short-term goal, this is ultimately what should happen to build a bigger movement, linking all the struggles together. The other way would be to make sure that we are moving towards food sovereign. Maybe also to share what we have with the students at the moment where we are at strike, for example. Where we have, for example, in the Robertson farm workers strike we sent 50 kgs of meal, white meal, we sent to them ... flour .. we sent 50 kg bags to them, we also sent living pigs to them, they have to slaughter them themselves, the pigs are living pigs, we don't buy it, it comes from farmworkers who are farming with pigs. We have projects. So we take the animals, give it to

them and they slaughter. They make their own bread from the flour. So that is also in principle that people have to connect with food. The politics around animals that have been raised by farmers so we link food sovereignty with the struggle. So this can maybe this can be a way that we can support the students struggle. To assist with food. However some of the challenges that we might face is to make sure that there is an impact. Because the struggles are not simple really and all of us sometimes have a very different understanding of what our own objectives are. I've been through this where I find other people not understanding the movement like I am understanding it. You get people in the movement that don't have the same vision, that don't have the vision to take the movement forward. You find comrades that have personal visions, want to hang on, getting power, they want to get to certain positions, they want to be sorting out themselves. We are influenced by the system – capitalist – so these are still challenges. Sometimes we also have challenges with movements who agree at such a stage that you find it difficult to build a network, to build linkages because there are disagreements. For instance the FSC and the African food sovereignty campaign. For instance we nearly have the same names and people are confused. What the is SA FSC now? So we also have internal problems, movements that we don't feel the same about how we're taking the struggle on and sharing the resources that are available. But all of those things, we can't deny it, things are there that you call impimpis within the movement, you can't really predict who they are or what they are but as long as the broader .. as people are standing up as people at the centre of it all and I think and all of those challenges can be.

Since the 1960s, there has been a great mobilisation of photography for social and political ends in the face of heightened neoliberal state capitalisms. New forms of collective resistance have emerged, opting for more 'horizontal', networked activism sustained through creative forms of protest and communication.

As photographers engaged in social activism, our single most important objective is to correct the banal mainstream vision and representations of revolt. Like us, mainstream media houses are politically situated – and oftentimes, not in the direction of the social movement in question. As activists, we cannot assume that anyone else is invested in sharing our narratives or disrupting the status quo. The responsibility thus rests on the storytellers within social movements to generate this counter-archive. This is important not just in terms of constructing virtual and real communities by way of disseminating the experiences of those involved on the ground, but also as a source of legal evidence and political ammunition, should activists be met with unprecedented treatment from authorities, such as police brutality.

In the creation of a portable kit of images that bear witness to the cause of the movement, there lie different approaches of photographic practice to keep in mind that should not be treated as mutually exclusive;

- Documentation of the core cause (visual representation of the failings of the status quo that the movement aims to change)
- Documentation of activism (visual representation of the organizing done on the ground aimed at changing status quo. Eg. protests, mobilizing etc)



On photography in social movements

– Zara Julius

all images © Zara Julius

In doing this work, it is important to consider the ways in which the camera is not politically neutral; the photographic image is a tool of power. It has the ability to enlarge our notions of what we have a right to observe, but cameras also lean themselves towards potentially violent representations and assumptions of photographic 'subjects', depending on photographic angles, composition, and the physical position of the photographer within the environment. Thus it is essential to consider the ethics of representation, especially in the contexts of activism, where estimations of power and legitimacy are at stake and in constant flux.

Such issues of representation and ethics are also important with regards to the sharing of images, and it is helpful to photograph with the intended platform in mind. Are these images for the movement to own and dispense? Are they for an independent article or photographic project? Are they primarily for social media and mobilisation? Answering these questions will help give our photographic practice focus and direction in often very overwhelming environments.

Toolkit for photographic practice:

- Primary camera with a versatile lens.
- Secondary camera (either another camera body with a different lens or a cellphone)
- Spare batteries / portable power bank.
- Multiple SD/memory cards
- UV filter/ lens protector. (This will help protect your lens, should you fall, or drop your camera in a protest scenario)
- Practical shoes
- Backpack

Things to keep in mind:

- Photography as social activism is faced with heightened "image prevention" (where photographers and journalists are often targeted by police). It's no longer enough to just "shoot back" as a photographer by capturing instances of police brutality, as an example back up your images whilst you're photographing.
- Photograph on different memory cards. If one card or camera gets confiscated or whipped-out by authorities, you will still have images saved on a different card.
- If photographing on a cellphone, use automatic uploads to virtual clouds, (eg. Dropbox or iCloud) where images are automatically backed up, in case your phone gets confiscated or damaged in a protest.
- Live-streaming is your friend.
- COLLABORATE with other (visual) storytellers. As individuals, we are all politically situated. The more nuances the counter-archive, the better.

The role of film and documentaries in popular struggle: what you can do to practically get involved

Nadine Cloete sits with Aaliyah Vayej & Aisha Hamdulay

*AK – Action Kommendant

AALIYAH: *After the success of your documentary ‘Action Kommendant’ and success within the South African and international film industry, we look to you today to give us advice and guidance on how to use film effectively to contribute to the struggle within which we find ourselves today.*

Thus my first question is, how do people who do not necessarily want to physically protest but do want to contribute to the struggle and the narrative thereof use film to do so? Where do you start and how do you go about finding your feet when using film as a tool for expression in this climate?

NADINE: (Laughs) I think first of all you must be aware that film is not politically neutral; it’s about images and representation right? So even if you are filming a clip your own ideologies play such an big role about who you’re going to film, angles, duration of the shot – all of that. I think for film you have to be so self-aware because all of that comes out. For example the live stream feature Facebook has is great but let’s say you start editing something, and then ideologies start coming into play in an even bigger way. With AK, part of the reason for its success is because I wasn’t seen as an outsider and people trusted me because of that. Because I was young, genuine and transparent about what I wanted to do as well as tried to discuss as much as possible with his family about what I was doing and who I was speaking to, involving them in the final edit of the film.

AALIYAH: *What would you say, in that process of trying to be transparent and honest in your expression, are the obstacles you face when film making? And how did you overcome these obstacles?*

NADINE: I think a big obstacle maybe even now when filming protests is, when known in a particular space such as UCT if you go out of that space to a place like UWC or SU the people there may not know you and might not be willing to speak to you. This I overcame by always being honest about what you’re trying to do and try to reach some kind of level of identification with the people you’re engaging with. Where you stand and how you position yourself I think that gets people to trust you, it is so important for those that do

not perhaps feel comfortable with being on the frontline of protest action to get into the film making process because we do need more images coming from the inside. I've lately started to think about how things especially on social media are being captioned, because you may think a statement has no bias but just check how the image and yourself are being positioned within your caption, for example those in support of FeesMustFall will caption any image differently to that of a news source. Because we are posting things on social media almost immediately, the people that follow you get to be involved on a personal visual basis in the conversation – this is important in also trying to get support for the movement in as well to show what's really going on.

AALIYAH: *What techniques would you suggest to use in order to bring across authenticity in film, if one does not have access to official documents/statements/other resources?*

NADINE: There must be an attempt to make it more personal, for example it's great to film a mass protest but it is even better filming short interviews so you actually hear a voice in the crowd. Try and get as personal as possible. For example in the AK film, before we learn of how radical he became we got to know him as a person first. I know students are not always willing to speak, I think if it's coming from the inside then people should consider giving that personal approach.

AALIYAH: *How do you approach someone on a sensitive topic that could be emotionally charged, such as 'black pain' in the Fees Must Fall movement? Without going too far or being too insensitive but still able to extract the truth.*

NADINE: If I think about AK, I carried a lot of guilt because I made my characters and interviewees go to certain spaces but I think when someone is comfortable enough with you and willing to go to those spaces – start and be honest with what you're going to question them on. I have had my experience where I have tried to push and it doesn't work out either making the interview super awkward or you leave both people feeling uncomfortable. Respect when someone does say no and further ask if there is anyone else willing or able to answer the question comfortably. If someone not familiar in the space came up to me and wanted a response I would also be hesitant so I think it's up to people within that space to use resources to put things out there.

AALIYAH: *What do you think the role of film is within the struggle? In terms of expression, documenting and contributing to the narrative of a movement like this.*

NADINE: Latin American filmmakers I came across wrote on film as a social weapon, using the camera as a weapon – this is a reality in this revolution because you're going to reach people even beyond your campus, problems and your own country. The way people perhaps keep in touch within friendship circles across the world is through watching the videos we make and post, looking for voices on the ground not wanting to hear the voices of outsiders. Videos are also obviously accompanied by captions now which spark conversations on their own around the issue at hand.

AALIYAH: *What are the logistics, process you follow when making a film?*

NADINE: If you do want to cover the revolution right now I would suggest following guerrilla styles, because going the route of applying for funding it's going to take long. You have to use your own resources to cover what's going on on the ground right now. Getting to know people, covering what's happening. If you wanted to make a more structured film and get financial support, the National Film and Video Foundation and crowd funding, hosting evenings and getting creative when trying to get funding and pulling resources.

AALIYAH: *How do you broaden your audience in terms of increasing the impact and relatability of your film? Providing a source of information and expression to larger than the immediate audience.*

NADINE: The way to do this is to deepen your object of attention, in AK I first described Ashley as the son, and school kid who liked music etc. those things that people can immediately relate to. Physically going to places beyond designated screenings, going to places and physically creating an audience and space. People have also stopped seeing students as kids; they see them now as criminals so I guess the job now is to get the audience to identify with them on a different level through the screen



Photography: Leila Khan

AALIYAH: *It's hard to show a balanced side of the argument and what is happening on the ground – how does one go about creating a balance?*

I don't think you need to be balanced, why because each side is telling their own story anyway. For example management is distributing its own statements and they will always have a bigger audience. So be very clear of your own ideologies because film can essentially be used as propaganda you need to push your own narrative. In this moment I don't think we should be worrying about objectivity.

AALIYAH: *How do you go further than your given audience? How do you expand your audience?*

NADINE: It's about taking the work to where the people are, physically taking the work into the space. People you want to reach may not always have the resources to reach the material so make it accessible, make people see what you're putting out there. If you do something on revolution I would recommend playing it to smaller groups so that you can have a proper discussion and feedback session after the viewing, because you can't engage with an audience of hundreds on the impact or have a Q&A conversation on what people thought and how they felt. Get it into civic centres or so on, but smaller groups so you can have in depth discussion afterwards as well as create a space where people can feel comfortable enough with the amount of people present to speak up. Space is something you really have to take into consideration, whether a space is racially classified and be expected to be open with your thoughts or opinions within the space.

AALIYAH: *How important do you think having feedback from audience members is? Or a discussion session after a screening?*

NADINE: The feedback helped me to think about where I screen and how I screen, you can't always control how people are going to respond to your work but it has meant that my politics keep changing and my opinions have been influenced by how people have perceived my work. I think people should be open to their views changing through conversation and I think it's a great thing that it does, we need to be open to being challenged by work or content. Otherwise how do you grow? You could be exceptionally aware of your own ideologies and positionality but people from other backgrounds with different views may pick up on things you haven't and interpret things according to their own understanding so bringing a new angle to your work – and that's okay and you have to accept that. As long as you're making an impact and creating a conversation.

AALIYAH: *Any other advice for young filmmakers that are covering the revolution right now?*

NADINE: Working as a collective when you're doing your work or when filming, remember the camera is also a weapon and use it wisely to further the revolution in your own way. But always be aware of your positionality; check yourself all the time on what you're filming and who you're filming and why. It's about changing the narrative through forms of representation.

Afrikan Music, Education and Being Together: an Exchange Between Ernie Koela and Asher Gamedze

Asher: When thinking and speaking about the struggle for free education, the mainstream discussion likes to focus only on fees. My understanding, however, is that we are fighting for an entirely different way of thinking about education and knowledge and their relationships to society. We have to insist on an education process that makes sense in our context: a curriculum that helps us, as African people, to better understand our world so that we can better transform it. A central part of that curriculum has to deal with music in society and how we can use it to make our lives, as Afrikan people, better.

I have seen and felt that music has a way of opening us up to each other – allowing us to connect with deep parts of ourselves and, through that, allowing us to connect with other people. In a context where our movements are often very fragmented, where people have acted in harmful and damaging ways toward one another to the extent that many comrades have left the movement, what type of work can you imagine music doing in the process of learning to love and treat each other better as comrades?

Ernie: the intricate fabric that comprises the soul and structure of music in Afrika is its ability to allow people freedom to create
- to partake in a song. So we sing,

a drum is played a shaker shakes, a group starts and ends. Before they end another group begins. Voice parts are separated, some wail, some shout, some stomp their feet while others clap their hands. If these were instruments they would all be doing different things that contribute to the soul of the song.

The songs in southern Afrika are in spirit of... and therefore to create the spirit, a body of people must sing together. This to me is a **sonic lecture** that is a site of wisdom within music.

It teaches us that, like Afrikan music with different instruments, sound textures, voice parts and rhythms that are in balance and conversation with each other creating beautiful musical moments, so must Afrikan's be with one another. The nature of the music demands it in order for it to be created!

Embedded within this is a parable about the Afrikans' identity. It is a morality in the form of sonic vibrations. The lesson is fundamentally a music frequency saying loudly **love one another you are all different but the same and therefore have a role to play.**

Thus Afrikan music is a lesson of **black** co-existence respect and love not merely a song sung but a moment and age felt that if we listen carefully to one another, songs like '*shiwel*' will make you understand yourself within a collective body.

We must take seriously a culture of Afrikan music as a way of consciously identifying with parts of ourselves that we want to forget but are retained sonically. These instruments are our history books and these songs our encyclopaedia.

Working With Community Media (then and now)

Zubeida Jaffer talks to Brian Kamanzi
[transcribed by Patrick Schuster]

[Brian Kamanzi] *In our last conversation we were talking about some of the newspapers and pamphleteering you had worked with during Apartheid. Could you tell us a bit about your experience of what mechanisms you used to print and so on?*

[Zubeida Jaffer] We usually got the assistance from students at UCT who gave us access to facilities. The printing we would get a little bit of money from unions, or from shopkeepers, or from printers (who wouldn't charge us much). We looked for people who had the facilities and worked there – we didn't really have a lot of costs.

[BK] *How did you distribute it?*

[ZJ] We started having a network where say two people would be assigned to a community and then we would start knowing people in the community by going door to door. Slowly one builds up a little committee in that area of young people and then that committee starts to help distributing door to door.

In terms of the community newspapers we got funding from the Catholic Church (World Christian Communication or something or another). We got funding from church organizations, and then we started the community newspaper which came out every 5 weeks. It came out every 5 weeks because if it came out more regularly then we would have had to pay a lot of money to register it.

[BK] *What was the process you guys went through to make contacts in the community – to be not only recipients of the story, but to contribute to the paper as well?*

[ZJ] It was a long process in my experience. We started one area, in Mitchells Plain, where there were already people organising a civic organization. There were already committees around the electricity issues. So we were looking for issues in the community. So example, you may want to go into an area where there is an issue and in helping with that then you can ask how you can take it further.

What we did initially was to look at all the places there was activity or things going on and we went to address those peoples around the Cape. The initial groupings we found were about 50 groupings. And these included social networks, church networks, all kinds of networks that were community based. And then through that, that gave us a sort of a network where we could say “ok, we do have somebody in Athlone” and “we have

somebody in Heideveld". These people would come to the monthly meetings and through that we focussed on one area per month every 5 weeks. So let's say we all decide we're all going to go to Hanover Park, because they're having a particular issue. And then we distribute the papers door to door. Through going door to door you start getting to know people, and hear what people are saying. Maybe they say go away, or come inside and talk.

[BK] *I know it was different time to now, but what were some of the key difficulties you had when you were starting up?*

[ZJ] I would say that many times we sat and looked at what is it that we have? We would do things like look at who are the people (our mothers, brothers, sisters) working who can use the phone. We would give them 10 numbers to call and say "phone here these numbers and tell these people that we are going to be sending them pamphlets" or whatever. In other words, you spread the cost all the time – that way you don't need a whole lot of money.

[BK] *Do you feel like there's still a place to push pamphleteering through print, or have you found that digital has been more effective?*

[ZJ] You see you need to say who you want to get to. They all have phones, so you need to use the phone – even if you just send out SMS' or something. Maybe then alert them to a Facebook site. I would imagine that having a database of phone numbers, emails, group emails would be very important.

It has to be very targeted. So if you wanted to target an area, you should check if there's a community radio station there. You're still at the stage where you still have to convince people that what you are standing for is completely legitimate. So if what you can do then, is prepare a programme so that people can know what your reasons are.

[BK] *What would a programme look like? Would it be a recorded session of people pre-packaged?*

[ZJ] I think pre-packaged, then you'll have the greatest chance of them wanting to take it, because it's free air-time for them. So then you also have Cape Town TV, they would also be happy to do a little video that they may take, then it has to be done well.

ALL
POWER
TO THE
PEOPLE



Artwork:
Rabia Abba Omar

Kamal Kweku Yakubu:

Policy as rules of the economic game. We are the players

If it is plausible that ideology will in general serve as a mask for self-interest, then it is natural to assume that intellectuals in interpreting history or formulating policy will tend to adopt an elitist position, condemning popular movements and mass participation in decision making, and emphasizing rather the necessity for supervision by those who possess the knowledge and understanding that is required (so they claim) to manage society and control social change.

The protests are fundamentally about economics. The cost of tertiary education, outsourcing, and dignified living wages are all economic problems. And so, we have both an educational and activist role to play.

As much as it is claimed that the economy grows because of the benefits of unfettered competition, we need to point out that it is in fact also underpinned by cooperation and a sense of morality. What stands before us then is the challenge of deflating the romanticised notions of the beauties of capitalism which have been shipped to countries such as ours that have recently undergone tumultuous political change and are in dire need of fresh ideas.

Our job then is to educate and organize. By organize I mean, to a great extent, organizing the organized. There already exists thousands, if not millions of people in South Africa who are sympathetic to the issues raised by the protests. What can link them together is a simple common agenda. The agenda, in my perspective is a calling

into question the current economic order.

It should not be difficult to persuade South Africans that a change is needed, when money is more and more concentrated in the hands of a few at the top, even after the fall of Apartheid. When the economy is unhealthy, because those who possess the knowledge confuse money with wealth.

Moving forward there are several things to note of economic policy. We do not only have 3 options of reprioritisation of funds, taxation or debt financing as the experts tell us, but the entire rules of the economic order can be changed since:

1. Economics is underpinned by human values and morality
2. Since the economy is underpinned by human values and moral restraints we all possess the knowledge and understanding that is required to manage society and control social change
3. We can develop economic policy from ubuntu instead of private interest.

We need an open debate – no holds barred – as we are learning, the ruthlessness of the leaders and their monopoly of violence, the stupidity of the “experts” must be countered by the courage, good sense, morality and persistence of the citizenry. We can never forget as Africans that the economic order of slavery was abolished only because of the persistence of the citizenry and not out of the insight of experts.

On the Working Class in Free Education

- Faisal Garba

While the university is primarily seen as a place of study, to the many workers whose labour make it function, a university is mainly a work place. As with workers elsewhere, university workers are highly underpaid, trampled upon and their knowledges denigrated. University workers across South Africa are forced to live on poverty wages, more so for the casualized workers who sell food, carry out refurbishment and build structures on campuses. For many years these workers were unorganized. It took protracted battles to force university management and the many bosses on campuses to begin to recognize the unions that workers choose to join. A lesson from these battles: "every single victory must be fought for" make the working class on and off campuses central to the struggle for free education. The power of the working class lies in the fact that, unlike students qua students, workers produce value. Withdrawing their labour necessarily brings the University to a halt. What is often glossed over in the accounts of how insourcing was won in some universities last year was the decision of workers to collectively withdraw their labour.

At the University of Cape Town, shutting

the university down became needless once the janitors, bus drivers, gardeners, security guards and food vendors joined the struggle. No learning or research can happen without the work of cleaning after, protecting, feeding and transporting the many students that depend on the University's shuttle service for transportation.

The social location of workers means that free education is fundamental to their basic demands on a society that exploits them. While in principle the currently insourced workers and their children can study for a reduced fee, they earn too little to be able to afford university education. The condition of work under capitalism means that workers have an organic self-organization that ensures disciplined clarity in struggle.

Unions as the expression of workers' power are natural allies in our struggle for free decolonized education. A worker controlled union has to own the working class demand for free education. In the Western Cape, the Commercial, Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSSAWU) has made common cause with free education in the cause of its ongoing heroic strike by farm workers. CSSAWU workers have been on campuses to speak about their struggles and educate students on the tactics used by those in power to exploit and oppress.

We have to approach unions, community organizations and movements in order to collectively strike at the core of why we don't have free education: a social system built on subsidy for the rich in the form

of tax breaks and legal tax evasion. We have to mobilize to collectively attack the system that makes it possible for the rich to build numerous holiday homes on the backs of the wealth created by the working class camped in overcrowded townships. Given the role of higher educational institutions in sorting people into different cogs of our racist patriarchal capitalism, the struggle for free education is beyond campuses. It can only remain on campus at the expense of its potential. It has to fuse struggles through a democratic alliance of popular formations.

From last year and in our ongoing struggle we know that such an alliance can reproduce existing hierarchies with students assuming the mantle of educating workers and communities to join "our" struggle. This is a colonial instinct that must be resisted. The denigrated ordinary people must be made the centre of the collective struggle for free education. Their knowledges and experiences valorised to form the groundwork of a liberated curriculum. A True camaraderie - when we can correct and criticize each other, share lessons from books and the fields, in the spirit of sharing and equality - can only be built by inverting the colonial logic of the cult of the booklore.

Photography:
Nishal Robb



Dureyah Abrahams on navigating her disability alongside campus protests with Aisha Hamdulay

In the midst of protest action, shutdowns, and calling for transformation and inclusion of the University space, we take some time to consider the disabled person in the context of our current situation. Many disabled students may often feel scared to join protests because of the practical difficulties and struggles they are faced with due to the nature of protests often being fast-paced, crowded, full and active. Dureyah Abrahams helps to shed some light on this.

Interviewee: Dureyah Abrahams

What are you currently studying and involved with?

- I am a first year BSocSci student (triple major, psychology, sociology and religious studies) at UCT and currently involved in the MSA, disability centre of UCT and writing for the MSA magazine.

How has your experience as a disabled person been at university?

- My disability comes in the form of a rare condition called spondylometaphyseal dysplasia, which basically translates to very short stature (a form of dwarfing) and skewed spine and joints, which now has me only mobile with walking aids and a wheelchair for long distances. My experience as a physically challenged student in university has been exactly that, physically challenging. But to be fair no one said it would be easy. This difficulty is due to many things, such as the lack of easy access in the campus with lifts, ramps and even doors. However, sometimes i feel I cannot really complain, as the disability centre, friends and staff all help out with everything. I have been quite surprised by all the help and aid I have received, as a student with a disability always has an additional facet of life to worry about- and that is access and mobility. This tends to use much of our stress and thought as we think more about how to get to class rather than the class itself. This assistance however has made studying, that was once said to be impossible, possible.

Have you been involved with the protests at all? Would u feel comfortable joining - why or why not ?

- I have not been involved in any of the protests, nor would I ever because if able bodied people, that are involved, are at many risks, it'd be even more of a suicide mission for myself or any disabled student to participate. We too have been advised by the disability

centre to steer clear of any signs of protests due to the health and safety hazards that it places us in. I have already been caught in the first protest of this time that left me stuck in a spot, unable to cross the masses to get to safety. This has frightened many of the disabled students because while able-bodied students are joining in or can fend for themselves, we are just praying not to be trampled on or get stuck. So yes, to answer the question, I do not feel comfortable going back let alone joining in.

What are some of the barriers preventing disabled persons from joining protests?

- The barriers preventing disabled students who wish to join protests are many, such as: the routes taken to protest are inaccessible (like roads, highways, stairs, walking from campus to campus), the aggression of the protests are huge hazards to the disabled, the retaliation of police on protesters such as stunt grenades and gas are no doubt detrimental to disabled students, and the unpredictable stampedes and riots too, basically anything wild and out of control that are health and safety hazards that take place on inaccessible routes will be barriers that prevent disabled students to join in.

How do you think the above issues can be remedied?

- If the current protests were controlled, such as those "silent or peaceful protests", they would solve all barriers and be all inclusive.

Who do you think the responsibility falls upon to assist a disabled person who wants to protest?

- I feel that it's no one's responsibility to assist disabled students who wish to protest, as I cannot imagine someone helping a disabled person to engage in a clearly hazardous environment, but it's more the responsibility to make it all inclusive, as it is after all a right for all to protest. So I feel it's the heads or leaders of the protests to make an all inclusive protest.

Do you feel your university does enough to provide you with adequate opportunities as the able-bodied person?

- I do feel the university has done "enough" to provide adequate opportunities as the able-bodied, but I do feel so much more can be improved, not even extra needs, just improvements on basic needs such as access. As a first year I was quite surprised at the state of the access of the campus and still cannot believe it today, regardless of all the efforts of the disability department, major improvements need to be made.

Do you have any other ideas of how to make protests inclusive for disabled people?

- Many of the disabled students feel straight up frightened and threatened by the aggressive and chaotic nature of the protests and protesters, hence a more civil approach to disabled students to be asked to join would or made feel more comfortable to partake would be a solution to inclusivity of the disabled students.

To us the disabled, protests feel more like a threatening situation that we should stay far away from for many health and safety hazards, let alone think of taking part in, which leave the disabled student community feeling frightened and guarded for their own lives, and excluded to participate in their own right- the right to protest.

Pamphleting tactics:

Model for Pathways to Free Education

1. Collect interviews and articles and collate into a pamphlet/booklet from students, academic staff, workers and trade unionists.

Example - Pathways to Free Education volume 1: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6dVO9Lj0oLkTkVtT3lxVHYwRIE/view>

2. Reach out to possible funders for to sponsor printing of the booklet. So far approaching trade unions, NGOs and private individuals (sourced through social media) has been most effective. Many small donations go a long way.

3. Create forums and spaces for debate on the issues at hand and record where possible! Make use of cellphone recorders and cameras along with free online podcast & video sites such as mixcloud.com and vimeo.com

Example debate/discussion: <https://vimeo.com/181052147>

Example podcast: <https://www.mixcloud.com/pathwaystoedu/talking-through-connecting-student-community-struggles-with-members-of-the-surplus-people-project/>

4. Choose strategic sites to gather and organise friends, family and colleagues to distribute your pamphlets and engage with people while handing out your material.

Useful tips:

- Interviews are often easier collect on a short time frame and their require a lot less from the participant than article, poems and pieces with fixed deadlines
- Pamphlets come in many shapes and sizes. If the goal is to simply outline a position or advertise an event short 1 page or A5 formats can work well in high volumes. Booklets and longer length pamphlets are useful as resources for popular education sessions and deeper community engagement.
- Fundraising without an organisation behind you might be difficult! An approach that was useful for us was often to ask donors to pay directly to the printing companies to help assure them the funds were going to the right place!
- Working out the price per booklet or price per 100, 250 or 500 and so on might be a good way to reach out to small and medium size donors as it turns the request for funds into something practical.
- Language and accessibility is important! While it's tough to get right, it's important to consider the intended audience of your pamphlet and collect content accordingly. Where possible it might make sense to incorporate different languages or even host sessions to translate existing content into different languages to reach more people!
- Set reasonable, achievable goals! Whether it's collecting 5 interviews or pieces a week or putting out a pamphlet in 1 month, laying out goals that are realisable given your team's capacity are key for building morale and helping the project get off the ground!



Digital campaigning

Photography: Nishal Robb

by Koketso Moeti

A distinction that is often used is the idea that there are ‘real’ activists and ‘online’ activists, something I think is false. What happens online can and does have a real world impact in many ways, affirmed by the increasing amounts of internet shut-downs, detentions related to views expressed online, and website blockings we have seen in 2016. Governments, corporates and elites are recognising online as a space where people are agitating, whether through their blogs, organising and the many other ways people use it.

Like many other technological advances of the past, the internet is having an impact on activism. But most of the time, the experts and owners of digital activism tools don’t look like the majority world nor are they based in it. This has meant that across platforms, a lot of the power dynamics that exist in person are replicated online.

Consider Facebook, where women have a difficult time having leaked nudes of themselves removed, but photos of women breastfeeding are taken down. This is patriarchy in action just in an online space, which reinforces the idea that women’s bodies are solely for consumption by others and our consent is not required.

But at the same time, Facebook has been a platform through which people engage in counter-speech. Speech done in numbers to counter racist, sexist, ableist views which has been powerful. Facebook Live has been used to broadcast the killing of a Black man by police officers and there are countless more examples of how it has been used to challenge power and expose truth.

But platforms that are specifically for activism are different and the challenge is, if those most affected by human rights violations, who are mostly low income Black women in the majority world, does it make sense that mostly white men in the global north own, control and set the agenda for digital activism?

Many online campaigning platforms serve the interests of corporations, and middle class issues such as rhino conservation. There is also the practice of astroturfing, where right wing, anti-poor and anti-social justice groups can pay campaigning platforms to promote their issues. We also need to question online petition sites who appear to be non-profit, but are in fact for profit entities where the CEOs have an estimated net worth of \$2 million US dollars. All from profits made through the sale of people's data.

For activists seeking to make use of online activism tools, it is important to make use of platforms that are 'home grown', founded in your country and that aren't going to sell people's data and profit from it. Be careful working with international groups which are top down, don't build local power and aren't interested in local context

A question I get asked a lot is whether the internet is creating a gap between 'online activists' and 'offline activists', a gap I often feel is more imagined than real. From our experience at amandla.mobi, a lot of the people who start campaigns on awethu.mobi are the very same people who are mobilising in other ways.

But at the same time, there are also groups of people who mobilise differently. During the 'Fees Must Fall' protests in 2015, some people – some of whom are alumni of these higher education institutions- protests felt that while they were unable to join students in the streets they could support in other ways such as donating for bail money, meals and other needed resources. This wasn't a sign of a 'gap' between the two, but a recognition that different forms of activism and activist support co-existing is important.

The temptation for many activists online however is getting caught in short term viral campaigns, rather than using them to grow commitment and move energy to systemic long term victories. I often feel that this temptation is largely because the current generation of activists is considered to be 'lucky' as a generation in which a growing number of people are able to access the internet.

But it is a generation that is no luckier than any other as throughout history, all ages of activists have had new technology that allowed them to reach bigger audiences than the previous ones. The exceptionalisation of the internet is one of the biggest threats to its effective use, because it leads to an over-emphasis of it which can be conflated with it and its benefits being an end to themselves rather than just another tool at our disposal.

- KM

Boycott & Divestment strategies: Case study on US universities with transnational solidarity for South Africa & Palestine

by Khadija Khan

Universities across the United States revel in their histories of contributing to revolution through their divestment from the South African apartheid state in the 1980s. Yet today, many universities exploit this instance of solidarity while continuing to operate in direct funding of state violence, nationally and across the globe. Private prisons operated by corporate companies are the modern form of American slavery, and these companies serve as major investing sites for higher education institutions. Israeli businesses that profit off of occupied Palestinian territories are as well. Just as students demanded divestment from the state violence of the apartheid regime, we must continue to demand divestment from state violence today.

We can understand this and the modern American university in the context of financialization. Higher education institutions are operating more and more like corporations. And because the focus is shifting more towards making a profit, universities are investing in problematic yet profitable industries. We are subject to capitalism's close tie between money and power - and we know that without a shift in money, there will not be a shift in power. We view divestment campaigns as direct access to material change - we must go beyond making a moral appeal for justice, and hit the universities where they will feel it.

Divestment has proven to be an effective and powerful tactic for students across issue areas. Fossil fuel divestment is one of the largest divestment campaigns in the country today. The approximate value of institutions divested from fossil fuels has now reached \$3.4 trillion dollars (<http://gofossilfree.org/commitments/>). This progress was largely accomplished by university students. However, we cannot view successful divestments in isolation from ongoing oppressions - with the example of Israel's settler colonialism of Palestine, 39 colleges (visualizingpalestine.org) are engaged in divestment campaigns, yet the violent Zionist agenda in American politics and economics remains strong. This must be in our active consciousness when approaching divestment, yet it must not serve as a barrier, but rather a driving force for more universities across the country to participate in this movement. When translating U.S. university divestment to South Africa's movement for free education, we must not forget the power that divestment held during the anti-apartheid struggle. It is important to remember the historical efficacy of boycott and divestment in contemporary struggles, even in post-apartheid South Africa. The struggle for free education is of an economic nature, and we must respond with our ability to alter such economic forces.



Photography: Nishal Robb

Useful tips to start a boycott and divestment campaign:

1. Identify cause, engage with community affected and activists working on the cause. Determine financial practices to be targeted. Discuss whether boycott and divestment on particular issues will be useful.
2. Start awareness campaigns on the issue. Community radio, workshops at mosques, churches and community halls etc. Share information on how divestment and boycott can effect change. Write articles and develop materials to be circulated for consciousness raising.
3. Develop clear goals. Identify demands and the steps needed to meet demands. Be clear about who those demands are directed to, and delegate tasks.
4. Engage in direct action - protest, negotiations, individual/community boycott and divestment.

Boycott Tactics:

Case study on 1957

Alexandria Bus

Boycott

By Chwaita Wenana Mamqhinebe
Mamkhomazi

Alexandria Township is very insightful when trying to understand the experience of a black community during apartheid: the repression, the resistance and the living and existence in between. The past and present of Alexandria has few unique differences but shares many similarities with all other townships. One of the main objectives of the apartheid regime was the segregation project that forced black, indians and coloureds out of city centres, and cities in general, into the townships through various legislation such as the Urban Areas Act. Examples of successful use of the Urban Areas Act are District Six and Sophiatown.

Alex wasn't exempt from the unjust and painful forced removals. Some Alexandria residents were removed to Soweto and Tembisa but a big part of Alex resisted because of values that they consistently affirmed, not only material and financial loss in terms of economic considerations but also the disruption of social relationships and devastating impact on family and community life. Alex was dominated by a political black elite but as time passed they allowed proletarians who were expelled in the 1940s through the Slum Clearance Act to rent in their backyards as *amagoduka* and slowly Alex developed a complex socio-political make up. It was out of these different groups in which Alex's political upheaval rose and resulted in the Mass Bus boycott.

The tight grip of influx control was felt by Alexandria residents and this was observed

through the inaccessibility of the Johannesburg job market. Nationalist policies were felt by the landowners, the proletarians and their children. These nationalist policies essentially pre-determined black children as political radicals or thugs. The Alex boycott highlighted the contradictions of racist capitalism in South Africa because while the apartheid system and its spatial planning sought to remove black people from cities, it however needed black labour in cities. Many employers preferred labour to be near their workplaces. For instance, Alex residents were the main provider of industrial labour to areas such as Kew and Wynberg. The government was forced to agree for black people to reside in Alex but they did everything in their power to destroy the idea that in Alex black people could freely own land. This was done through interfering in the structure of Alex's residents' homes by flattening houses and creating hostels.

In the 1950s, South Africa experienced great financial growth through robust industrialisation that was enjoyed by white capital at the expense of cheap black labour. The people of Alexandria could barely survive with the wages they got from white capital. When the Public Utility Transport Corporation (PUTCO) and the Road Transportation Board announced a 25% raise to the bus fares between Johannesburg and Alexandria (from 4 to 5 pence) this was not only a transport issue but an attack on the survival of black families. It was already an injustice to be forcefully removed from the cities but to carry the extra cost of living far from your work place which entailed spending most of the household budget on transport was even more painful to bear. It was made worse by unemployment. These factors for the black people created dire conditions to live under and the resultant anger triggered resistance, manifesting as industrial disputes by militant unions such as SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions) and

mass boycotts. The bus boycott exposed the extent to which the urban segregation project was racist, unjust and promoting poverty. The boycott simultaneously did the work of conscientising, as public opinion spoke against the fare increase and allowed for the conditions that made the boycott possible amongst other things.

The bus boycott was about more than a penny rise movement. There was a deep dissatisfaction of people in Alexandria over the bus service (the single fare, no stage system, overcrowding, injury threatening, crush at peak hours, 2 hours of waiting to get a ride (unsafe) and the high cost of transport compared to the weekly wage but mass mobilization was around the life of black families under the apartheid regime. This bus boycott called for permanent residence of black people in white cities. It fundamentally questioned the political order that allowed for the oppression of black people. Hence it won solidarity from many quarters and was supported by communities that were not directly affected by the increase such as Moroka, Bloemfontein and East London. The bus boycott was driven by a left wing political leadership of a mass movement that had no leaders standing out. The boycott was driven by passengers who included workers, students, learners and the unemployed. Everyday thousands of boycotters walked from their homes to their work places, schools and destinations.

On the 6th of January the people of Alex decided that "azikhwela" - we will not ride and boycotted PUTCO busses and on the same day the Alexandria People's Transport Action Committee (APTAC) was formed, that was the main negotiator for the people of Alex and other political groups throughout the boycott. 15 000 Alex residents started walking 9 miles from Alex to Johannesburg leaving the buses completely empty. Neighbouring areas such as Sophia Town

joined the boycott the following day and this resulted in 70 000 people boycotting PUTCO buses. Many other areas had alternative transportation in the form of train services but Alex did not have trains or taxis.

The boycott continued for 3 months but by March workers were getting physically and psychologically tired. A meeting was held to discuss the direction of the boycott. There were talks of a stay-away with slogans "stay at home" - linked to a R1 a day campaign and "when we are tired we shall rest" that mobilised around the idea of a pound a day (R2 a day) which later precipitated the demand for a national minimum wage. The threat of a stay-away meant that the bus owners would suffer, the market would also suffer consequently, which in turn would affect the economy of the Apartheid state itself. But before the stay-away could even begin, negotiations started and at that time there was an internal split as the costs were rising. Leaders were undecided and PUTCO would agree to terms that the fare would be restored if people would turn up to ride the buses and a permanent solution to the bus system. Some groups wanted Alex residents to lead them into a decision and some had additional demands that included compensation from PUTCO for arrests and deaths during the boycott. The groups gave conflicting messages to the masses and there was no clear direction. This was a time of confusion. With this, after months, the Alexandria boycott ended but continued for weeks in other areas.

The importance of understanding local struggles cannot be overstated, as the case of the Alex is that it can lead us in understanding the challenges of national struggles.

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The protest method of Hunger Strike: In conversation with Jonathan Butler from University of Missouri student protests

Interviewer: Brian Kamanzi

1. Greetings Jonathan, thanks so much for taking the time to speak to us! If possible could you briefly introduce yourself and the context surrounding your hunger strike at the university of Missouri?

Greetings, my name is Jonathan Butler and I am a recent graduate of the University of Missouri. I attended the University of Missouri for both my undergraduate and graduate degrees and during that time I witnessed a culture on campus that actively cultivated hatred, racism, sexism, ableism and many other forms of oppression. Even in the face of policy advocacy from student organizations and protesting from activists nothing changed. So after years of injustice I was fed up and ready to take a personal stand of self-sacrifice in defiance of the injustice far too many people faced on campus.

2. Why did you choose to use the method of a hunger strike?

I personally chose to do a hunger strike for two main reasons, first because of the political nature in which hunger strikes, and ultimately the act of self-sacrifice, have been used throughout history. Second, because as a part of the collective of students who were demanding justice on campus we had sent letters, emails, social media posts, peaceful protests and the like but received no tangible response or change at the university. So for me, I wanted to employ an act of peaceful protest that would truly make social change a centerpiece of the values my university had going into the future.

3. What steps did you go through to prepare, execute and sustain the hunger strike?

There was a lot of mental and emotional preparation that I took with getting prepared for the hunger strike but I come from a deep-rooted heritage in the Black church so fasting and praying weren't a foreign concept for me. One of the most notable preparations I made was researching how long term fasting impacts the mind and body so that I could be mentally prepared for the possibility of an indefinite strike.

4. What were some of the gains and losses from the resolution of your protest and do you have any advice for other young people considering to use this method?

The major gains were the removal of our former president who was ineffective, the creation of diversity and inclusion campus initiatives, and the solidarity that shown among marginalized groups during that time. The major losses were the psychological toll that was taken on all of the student protestors and the gaps in academic achievement that many individuals suffered as a result of being actively involved in organizing and activism efforts. My primary advice to young people considering the method of hunger strike would be to do your research and take the time to determine if this method will achieve your desired end-result but overall utilize whatever method of peaceful protest you deem necessary to advocate for justice and liberation for you, your community, and this world.

A perspective from the high school occupations in Brazil *with Cassia Quezia*

Hello everyone! Hope you are fine.

My name is Cassia Quezia, I'm 18 years old , I'm Brazilian and I've already finished school, but I didn't get into college yet.

So, as we know, the education for us and the opportunity to get into college is so difficult, that's why I'm in the student's movement.

The movement here in Brazil is strong and at the same time, it becomes a real struggle to us. When we boycott some schools, we make a reunion with students from that school and students who go there to make the movement stronger, after that we decided to occupy the school, to try become things better and to have all rights in "our hands".

Although, the government and some people don't believe in us, we keep fighting and turning the movement bigger.

In the occupation we are like a family, we have to take care of our schools so, we distribute tasks for everyone there, like, a group take care of food, another one about cleaning, the other about security (because we don't receive mídia which is against us, or people who don't care about our movement), the school is ours!

We occupy schools and go to the main streets here, to get visibility and show to them that our fight is important, and we don't occupy to play, but we occupy to resist and make our future better.

I studied at Vicente Rao, the name of school, and there didn't happen an occupation, we thought that weren't students strong enough to this movement, by the way, the most of teacher supported us with occupations, they went in some with us, they stopped to work, they really were into this movement! My parents they don't really like that I'm into this movement, because the media tell them that it is dangerous and unavailable.

Every time that I was in a school occupied, the police didn't leave us off! The most of the time they were there, and when we started sing songs of fight they wanted to interrupt us, shooting gas bomb, putting us away.. so, the relationship with Themis not good! The government told them to attacked us, when we started with this beautiful movement! But they know that we won't stop!

The education is our only opportunity to win, and this fight, is ours!

“Building Genuine and Robust International Solidarity Networks”

by Raymond Sango

Capitalism is facing an existential crisis. More and more people are questioning its fundamentals and its logic. From the United States of America, the bastion and fountain of capitalism where the Democratic Socialist Bernie Sanders contested in the Democratic Party primaries and received an unprecedented support in country egregious in its demonizing of anything sounding socialism or communism. Unfortunately he lost the election to the establishment and Wall Street favourite, Hilary Clinton who has been forced to embrace some Democratic Socialist principles such as; minimum wage, green and environmentally friendly policies to reduce to address the menace of climate change. The rise of Donald Trump as a right wing anti-globalization candidate mobilizing the American white working in support of: tight immigration policies, against Wall Street and international finance, Chinese overproduction and currency devaluation illuminate the depth of the crisis of capitalism. Across Europe the anti-immigrant sentiment is rising and is an expression of a yearning for jobs by the working class albeit with false class consciousness. In Africa and Southern Africa in general questions are being asked on the slow pace of reform and transformation after decades of celebrating independence.

The radicalization of students and youths in the Southern Africa region is clearly

an indication of the general demand for socio-economic transformation that is broad-based and far reaching beyond the elite compromises agreed between the liberation movements and the racist settler capitalist dictatorships. Demands for the decolonization of education are an onslaught on the superstructure of racialized capitalism whose accumulation through exploitation of cheap labour and land theft is covered up by the reinforcement of racial inferiority, alienation, and forced acceptance of the logic of neoliberal capitalism and its pillar, private property. The othering of the African working class and the justification of class inequality, articulation of physiological deficiencies through pseudo-scientific theories embraced and entrenched by the still unreformed bourgeois racist epistemologies is meant to protect the system of capitalism from falling apart.

Regionalizing and globalizing the #feesmustfall# or #decolonialeducation# struggles is indispensable in ensuring the emergence of a formidable movement against the regional and global system of neoliberal capitalism. The 1960s radical student movement in France permeated borders and become a global movement. Internationalizing the struggles entails that radical student activists in the regional should embrace the #feesmustfall# #decolonialeducation# campaigns beyond elite convergence at

national leadership level. The radical student movement in South Africa is asking profound and pertinent question on post-colonial Africa. The questions are not confined within the borders of the nation state. They are also being raised by the unemployed youths and student across Africa and the world in general. Embracing them and demanding transformation of the neoliberal capitalist economies which are exclusive is how easily the struggles can and should be generalized.

Coalescing the anti-dictatorship and neoliberal capitalism struggles being led by the ; #feesmustfall# in South Africa together with its associate anti-capitalist organizations linking up with labour movements and social movements fighting for equality and social justice; the anti-Mugabe dictatorship and anti-imperialism and neoliberal austerity struggles being led by the International Socialist Organization –Students and ZINASU in Zimbabwe which are all part of the movement towards building the People’s Assembly Against Poverty, Dictatorship and Neoliberalism; Swaziland National Union of Students which is challenging monarchical rule and tyranny in Swaziland; the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) in Namibia and the student movement; and other countless progressive social justice and radical anti-capitalist student and youths movements and labour unions is key in the process of building a durable and far reaching regional anti-capitalist student movement with enormous power to inaugurate a social transformation formidable and enduring enough to withstand the reactionary response of capital and compradioral lackeys running the affairs of international capital in the region.



Artwork: Rabia Abba Omar

The regional political economy is intertwined and closely linked. The regional multinational corporations operating the mines, banks, factories and other commanding heights of the economy are running a capitalist system which transcends the boundaries of the nation-state. To defeat them it requires an equally bold regional class effort. Capitalism cannot be defeated in one country. Far reaching structural reforms such as free education demanded an all out regional struggle of students with the solidarity of labour unions, social movements and progressive socialist and social democratic parties. Capital must be squeezed. If it is given an outlet to disinvest and invest in another neighbouring country it would have won. Regional organizations such as SADC are in the hands of black elites and international capital. The hope lies in the self-activity of class conscious revolutionary voices from below united along class lines beyond race, ethnic belonging and nationality.

Lessons for #FeesMustFall from Ethiopia's #OromoRevolution and the quest for self-determination and land

The legacy of colonialism and apartheid in appropriation and dispossession remains a central problem in South Africa. Across the global South, land and water grabbing has escalated in a period of multiple crises of food, energy, climate and care. This moment has also reopened the political space for renegotiating or even reconfiguring 'the social contract' with the state. The possibilities and risks facing us come together quite sharply with tumult, uprisings, revolutions and civil wars. Protests in Ethiopia are embedded in the land question and the quest for self-determination and pull together this promise and risk.

Ethiopia has one of the fastest growing economies in the world, a poster child of the West and ally in their war on terror, dubbed the 'African Lion.' Protests have begun to unravel this. Last year, a group of elementary and high school children in Ginichi, a small town 80 kms from the capital, held a protest against an investment project which would clear a forest reserve and football park. This was part of a plan to expand the capital which threatened to dispossess farmers and deepen ongoing gentrification.

The Oromo nationality, who have been at the centre of the protests, are the majority of the population with 35% out of 99 million. Drawing on experiences in previous protest waves, activists mobilised against the expansion plan for the capital. The significance of this can be traced to the very foundations of the modern state in Ethiopia. The capital, Addis Ababa was originally known as Finfinnee (an Oromo name) and was established in 1886 on land stolen from Oromo people. Names of places and cultural heritage had been erased and replaced with the dominant and second largest nationality, the Amhara. The 1974 revolution saw the end to feudalism and the military junta oversaw the state taking ownership of all land. To date, private ownership of land is prohibited. The balance of power shifted once more in 1991 and the government and economy is now dominated by the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front. Tigray nationality form 6% of the population. After 1995, rural land rental markets were liberalised. But this was geared to facilitating



Photography: Nishal Robb

large scale investments while smallholder farmers did not have structural support. Richer households coped better than poorer female headed households. Collectivisation programs were imposed in a manner that displaced communities onto less fertile lands and cut off from resources to make room for large scale projects. In some cases, brute force was used. The Anuak genocide in 2003 marked one of the bloodiest chapters when about 400 Anuak people were killed in one day.

Today, hunger strikes, silent marches, sit ins and students in their residences have been attacked with live ammunition, enforced disappearances, torture and widespread rape. Other nationalities, including the Amhara and Konso have also marched for self-determination and greater political and economic rights with a growing sense of solidarity. About 1000 have been killed across the country. Even though the degree and scale of repression in South Africa is not the same, the tactics are eerily similar. The sorrow and sense of devastation has been overwhelming, but so is the resistance.

We must learn from these students who, have managed to build beyond their university spaces. They are not isolated but embedded in broader struggles. The march by Wits students to COSATU house, attempts to build links with NUMSA, the Taxi Association and of course outsourced workers, are just the beginning.

- HK

Caught in a Protest?

Here's what to do!

- Nombuso Mathibela & R2K

In protest, you may encounter the police and in large protest, police often detain or arrest activist. If police officers start asking you questions regarding the protest, you are under no legal obligation to give them answer.

Popular Charges

Most commonly under the Gatherings Act you could be charged for **'illegal gathering'** – either convening a gathering without giving notice, or attending a gathering that has been prohibited.

You could be charged with other common law offences not included in the Gatherings Act:

1. **'Public violence'** - is a very broadly defined the unlawful and intentional commission, together with a number of people, of an act which assumes serious dimensions and which is intended forcibly to disturb public peace and tranquillity or to invade the rights of others.
2. **'Malicious injury to property'** - consists of unlawfully and intentionally damaging the property of another.
3. **'Assault'** - consists of unlawfully and intentionally applying force to another person, or inspiring a belief in another person that force will be immediately applied to them. (Assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm is another form of assault, where the accused caused or intended to cause serious injury.

Arrest During a Protest

If a police officer sees you commit an offence or has probable cause to believe that you were involved in committing a crime you can be arrested. You will be informed of the crime you have committed or that which you are suspected of committing. The police have the legal right to search your private belongings and to search you without your consent if you have been arrested. NOTE: resisting arrest can cause other charges to be added against you and the police are authorised to use reasonable force to arrest you.

Right to Remain Silent

Upon arrest you are only required to give your name and address and nothing further and anything you say may be used against yourself or one of your comrades in court. You have a right to remain silent and not to be cornered into a confession. Always carry your proof of address in case of arrest as this can make it faster for you to get bail upon arrest. If any of you have a phone on you send the following information to your legal representative or comrade: the name of everyone that was arrested with you, the name of the arresting officer, which police station you are being taken to or the registration number of the police vehicle you are in and the contact details of someone who lives with you or your next of kin.

Steps after the arrest

1. *Taken to the police station*

In a police van or car, be careful not to talk about the event of arrest if you are in a group.

2. *The Identification Process*

You are required to give your name and address. A police officer will take your fingerprints and you will be photographed.

3. *Holding Cell*

You may be put in a cell before you are charged - note: this is not jail or prison but merely a holding cell until you are either granted bail or appear before the magistrate or any other court of Law.

4. *Interrogation*

Conversation between the arrested and police officer, usually takes place in the police car or in an interrogation room. Again, you have no legal obligation to answer any question or provide any information other than your name and home address.

5. *Bail for minor offences*

I.e. trespassing and injury to property, “police bail” can be granted when an agreement is made with the investigation officer that you will pay a specific amount of money as bail or you could be released on warning to appear in court. It is important to note that bail is merely a tool of ensuring that you will appear in court and it is not about getting the most amount of money from the person seeking bail. This amount will be confirmed at the official bail hearing in court and it must be paid in cash. Get a signed receipt for the full amount from the officer who takes your payment. If the police are being unreasonably difficult in giving bail then you may contact the deputy prosecutor at the Magistrate Court of your jurisdiction to possibly agree to a form of bail.

Detention

You have been held in brief custody while the police decide if there is enough evidence to charge you, the police have a maximum of 48 hours to detain and present you with your charges, this excludes weekends and public holidays. During this period the investigating officer will do their job of consulting and investigating the case. You continue to have the right to remain silent, a right to legal representation of your choice, to talk and be visited by your partner, parent, next of kin and a medical practitioner.

NOTE: police cannot demand any information nor coerce you into making a confession about the event or your comrades. Be careful of what you say to anyone around you because it can be used against you in a court of law.

For a more comprehensive guide see short-link: goo.gl/LkYWtm

[full link: <http://www.r2k.org.za/wp-content/uploads/R2K-Protest-Guide-2015-final-web.pdf>]

Those at protest gatherings will more than likely be confronted by the **SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICES (SAPS)** in the form of **PUBLIC ORDER POLICE (POP)** or in extreme circumstances, **TACTICAL RESPONSE UNITS (TRT)**.

Protest Gatherings and the Police

POP members will be wearing body armour and helmet, equipped with a shield and tonfa, pepper spray, handcuffs (and cable ties), teargas and stun grenades, a shotgun with approved rounds, 40mm

by Rouen Thebus

If negotiations (which must seek to promote the right to protest) between protesters and the police fail, and life or property is in danger, the police must: Warn protesters in at least two official languages that they must disperse. The warning must be audible and it should be able to be seen that the police are preparing to use force. Enough time must be given to protesters to disperse peacefully. Give a second warning in at least two official languages, giving protesters and innocent bystanders enough time to peacefully disperse and to leave the area.

If those at the protest gathering have not dispersed after receiving these two warnings, in the time provided, the commanding officer may authorise the police to disperse members using minimum possible force under the circumstances. The use of force must begin with the least violent tactic or weapons available and great regard must be given to de-escalating conflict.

WHAT WEAPONS CAN POLICE USE?

Pepper Spray and Tear Gas: may not be used unless specifically instructed by operational commander (may not be used at all in confined spaces).

Stun Grenades: are often used though not directed by SAPS National Instruction 4 (must be rolled to avoid injury and very thrown directly at protesters).

Rubber Bullets: may only be used to disperse a crowd "in extreme circumstances, if less forceful methods have proven ineffective.

Water Cannons: may only be used on the command of the operational commander.

Firearms and sharp (live) ammunition, including birdshot (fine lead pellets) and buckshot (small lead pellets): are strictly prohibited in crowd management.

One of the mandates of the SAPS TACTICAL RESPONSE UNITS (blue berets) is to give support during crowd-management situations. The TRT's presence indicates that the POP may have lost control of the situation and requires more aggressive methods to disperse the protest.

4 Tips for Working with Media during #FeesMustFall

Mishka Wazar

The media is there for a reason. The Press Code of South Africa obligates journalists to report on what is in the public interest, and right now the protests for free, quality education in South Africa are at the forefront of public interest. Reporting on these events in the most objective and balanced way possible is what every journalist strives for. Mistrust of South African media is understandable, particularly mainstream media because in the past it has contributed to problematic narratives regarding student protestors. However, this criticism has been taken and many outlets are trying to improve the way they write and portray these protests. The media, like most institutions, caters towards a specific type of person, but South African media is slowly trying to change itself, and that can't happen unless journalists are allowed to report in peace. Here are 4 tips to working with media during #FeesMustFall:

- Let them take photos – by law, in any public space (including public universities) everyone is allowed to take photographs of people, buildings and events. Section 16 of the Constitution protects media freedom, and SAPS Standing Order 156 prevents even the police from forcing journalists to delete or stop taking photos. Photos are evidence of actions committed or not committed, and are important.

- The media are targeted too. Showing different perspectives and informing the public are threatening to actors who are trying to repress and control events, such as university management or SAPS. During #FeesMustFall this year, many journalists were specifically shot at, teargassed and arrested for helping students and recording police actions. Students must allow and assist journalists because they are also put in danger and having media nearby is a good way of preventing police brutality on students.

- Preventing the media from doing their jobs enacts censorship. Journalists either have to side with students or other parties for their own protection, instead of remaining neutral parties. This affects storytelling and is dangerous for media in this country, where important institutions are trying to censor us anyway. Journalists shouldn't be morally harassed and asked to "pick a side." Narrators aren't part of the story.

- Explain events to the media. Many journalists don't actually know what's going on in the background and can't report properly if they don't understand the cause of events. A fire is just a fire unless we know why it was set. Student media also suffers in this regard because they aren't allowed to take part in meetings and so the narrative of events becomes warped. If a journalist asks a question, answer them.

Nudity is a decolonizing projectile bullet for radicalized bodies that are marked by difference. It is violent; it is performance; it is activism; it is contradictory; it is indestructible. Therefore, nudity that is assembled through improvised environmental sound, along with the ashen images of the street's stun grenades and the presence of the body itself, is an act of precarious ancestral knowledge, as well as a potential ritual for reallocating gestures of protest. The naked body demands passage, whether alone or in a group. It is a recurring action that I have learned from Black women living on the street in the city of Salvador in Bahia, Brazil. Here, I present seven important points for carrying out premeditated actions so as to prevent failures and disarticulate possible police action:

BLACK POLITICS: THE
BODY IN PROTEST.
A PROGRAM OF
SELFCARE FOR NAKED
ACTION

Michelle Mattiuzzi

1. *In order to act without clothing, one must be attended to and accompanied by at least one other person. Ideally, such actions should take place in a group.*
2. Choose a location. Identify possible escape routes, and verify the movement of people and authorities in the place where the action will occur.
3. *Risk is a principal component of the action. Pay attention to the butterflies in your stomach and keep yourself present, but make sure you control your anxiety and act carefully.*
4. Wear light clothes that are easy to remove. Ideally, wear clothes with pockets where store a plastic bag to hold the clothes once you've removed them.
5. *Take off your clothes and guard them in the plastic bag.*
6. Walk calmly and deliberately through the location you have chosen. If you feel that your body is threatened, run.
7. *When you take off your clothes, throw your nudity at the world. The naked body is a powerful weapon.*

This action risks suffering recriminations or discriminations from passers-by; there is the probability and possibility of facing lynching, enchantment, or discontent from a local audience. For a body outside of accepted patterns, the adjective "naked" is a negation of patriarchal, colonial norms. The exhibition of a Black body re-stages political repositioning; it is a means of escaping a scenic narrative of pain and of exposing secrets. To continue on our path while naked is a radical performance. Being a racialized body, we lay ourselves down in the mouth of a sleeping lion; we display a sharpened knife between our bloodstained teeth.

How to organise medical support during protest

Princess Ndlazi

Our team was made up of a variety of students from the Faculty of Health Sciences. We had medical students, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, audiology and speech therapists. This was important because from our experience during these protests, many students had muscle cramps and pains, stiff joints, etc that do not necessitate a 'medical doctor'.

At the Faculty students are divided into clinical (senior) students and preclinical (junior) students. The clinical students are the ones with the most experience, therefore they would be in charge of their clusters. In these clusters there were between 2-5 members depending on the need. There was also a team of qualified doctors available to assist if the situation got out of hand, or if the cases were too complicated.

Base Camp

There was a Communications team set up at a safe haven, they handled all calls. They acted like a switchboard and were the only ones outside first aid who had the contact of the leader of the first aid team. The Communications team is also important if more supplies are needed. The first aid team had a base that contained most of their supplies, where the leaders of first team were stationed. This must be a safe place away from the main action, but close enough to despatch the clusters.

There were different stations for the most common injuries: teargas and pepper spray station, dehydration, burns, etc. This allows easy access to the relevant supplies. There should be at least 2 people who are able to triage the cases at the entrance or door. They are the first to see any casualties and they will decide which station that individual must go to. They must have markers and a letter or simple denoting where they should go. This should be predetermined, for example we used P for pepper spray and T for teargas. It is important to keep this as simple and logical as possible.

The leader will not touch a single casualty. They must stay at the base at all times and be on the phone at all times. They are in constant contact with the Communication team, first aid clusters, doctors on standby

and paramedics. The leader must make judgement calls and give clear instruction. All actions or decisions must be feedback to them to ensure that they have a holistic and informed view of the situation. They cannot leave, therefore are reliant on the team's feedback and communication. At base there should be someone documenting the different calls and keeping track of which team members are coming or going. There should also be someone keeping track of supplies.

Function

The Communications team would need to provide a location, how many people injured, the types and extent of injuries. Clusters of 2-3 were sent out to these locations initially, where an assessment would be done and feedback to base on whether reinforcements are required or not. As far as possible avoid people going off alone. We specifically had a special "task team" containing only senior students who were tasked to travel with the masses to deal with any injuries, make assessments and feedback to base. Those in this "task team" must be experienced and sharp.

Each member of the team wears a white laboratory coat in order to be identifiable as medical assistance. In a coat or backpack, each member has enough supplies to deal with the most basic cases. This also allows the team to be mobile, in case they must move with the injured. It also reduces back and forth to constantly replenish supplies.

Debrief

Each member should have basic skills in dealing pepper spray, tear gas and panic attacks. The importance of being separate from those protesting is important for their safety and to allow them to perform their function. Each member must be aware of what can or cannot be done to them from a legal or human rights perspective. Medical assistance is not to be harmed and an injured person cannot be arrested while receiving medical care.

Basic supplies

- Gloves
- Gauze
- Bandages
- Sterile water
- 20ml syringes
- Alcohol swabs
- Savlon
- Asthavent
- Anti-histamines
- Rehydration mixture
- Milk

Common injuries

- Minor cuts/scrapes
- Lacerations
- Dehydration
- Panic attacks from stun grenades
- Pepper spray
- Tear gas
- Asthma attacks
- Burns
- Head injuries
- Injuries from rubber bullets
- Musculoskeletal pain: twisted ankles and painful joints

On Self-Care and Mental Health

by Lorna Houston

The self-care needs of activists are often neglected and considered a luxury in favour of doing our best for the cause. What is forgotten is that we cannot perform at our best if we are not taking care of ourselves.

The challenge of taking care of ourselves, family responsibilities, work / studies and activist duties, is daunting for most. Often, it is our own self-care needs that are sacrificed in the busy-ness and perceived urgency of the moment. We forget that the struggle for justice and equality is long and protracted. It is necessary to practice self-care and make sure that our own needs are met. Self-care practice ensures a healthy being and thus a healthy activist. We need to care for ourselves before we can care for others. This is not about being selfish, rather it is about being strategic and wise.

Much has been written about stress and trauma and how these impact upon us. We are experiencing stress and trauma on a daily basis and are not immune to the effects which over time can include both physical and mental health problems.

Stress is caused by daily life & the difficulties we put up with, stressful life events like changing jobs, death or loss and traumatic events eg. incidents that produce feelings of shock, fear and helplessness. Our response to a situation determines if we experience stress or not.

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock, fear, denial and helplessness are typical.

South Africa's history of colonialism, slavery, apartheid and neo-colonisation means that we live with very high levels of intergenerational trauma. In addition, current trauma may extend well beyond a once-off event and lead to compassion fatigue / vicarious trauma; post traumatic stress disorder and continuing traumatic stress disorder.

One of the immediate effects of stress and trauma can be fear, and when we experience fear our thinking brain shuts down and the emotional brain takes over causing a more automatic response and behaviour. This is fine if we are in a burning building. If the fear remains and the fire is out, we are likely to be highly irrational as the thinking brain is not in charge. We can usually recognise this behaviour quite easily in others, when we say they need to calm down, get control of themselves or relax. As adults and activists, we need to function from our logical, thinking brain to create solutions and change the world for the better.



all images © Zara Julius

Here are some useful self-care tips for Body-Mind-Spirit:

- Drink water - carry a water bottle
- Eat healthy food - put some fruit or snack in your bag
- Avoid energy drinks - they distort our awareness of just how tired we may be
- Get enough sleep
- Avoid mind altering substances - under pressure it is easy to create dependency on these (alcohol and pharmaceuticals)
- Move - exercise, dance, run, walk
- Rest - be quiet with yourself (watching tv and sleeping is not the same as rest)
- To calm down: Stop a few times during your day and breath deeply and slowly, in through your nose and out through your mouth. When we get a fright we hold our breath, so this also helps to control breathing.
- Manage your social media time - especially if you are reading and watching loads of traumatising stories
- Ask for help
- Enjoy music / art to uplift your spirits
- Play / laugh / relax / have fun
- Express gratitude
- Forgive yourself - you are not perfect, none of us are
- Engage in spiritual practice of your choice

'Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.' - Audre Lorde

In Conversation with Dudu Ndlovu¹: *Useful tips when chairing Plenaries/Meetings*

RT: *During RMF/FMF there was this idea that we must reimagine the spaces we found ourselves in and these even included plenaries/meetings and you were called upon to chair many. Could you speak to and give insight around other dynamics one should be aware of (and useful tips) outside the conventional understanding of chairing plenaries/meetings?*

DN: So I think one of the things that was very important when it came to chairing, which we were at least trying to attempt, was to call and attend an intersectional space. It was very important for the chair to be aware, not just about the use of language, but also of the position of the different people who were speaking, and try and make sure in terms of the voices that were allowed to speak, that would be taken into account. So depending of the type of conversation, in terms of decision making, while we do believe in, well not exactly a democracy, we never use to vote (or rely on voting) - We always allowed the discussion to reach a point; where everyone needs to convince each other. But it's very difficult, given the different positions (of people), trying to make sure that certain voices don't overpower others, especially regarding matters that doesn't pertain to them or concerning people who might be sitting on the lower end in terms of positionality. So as a chair, it's very important to sensitive

to that and get or allow people who due to lack of positionality be involved in the conversations and be part of the decision making process who wouldn't normally be able to.

Also make sure of language - making sure people use the right pronouns, that ableist language is not used - that violent suggestions and violent conversations gets addressed and called out - that understanding is arrived at without collapsing the space, without derailing and ensuring that these persons are also not excluded from the conversation or the decision-making process - Making sure that it is a learning and unlearning space but getting and sticking with the program and getting to the point of why we there. So it was often a drawn out, learn as you go situation but I think ultimately what it was about was call a safe space, which is always very difficult because we haven't fully established what are safe spaces.

So as general tips go, just the dynamic of where the meeting is taking place, or for instance where you just sitting. People like to sit on tables when chairing to make themselves higher up than everyone else, I think it's important that doesn't happen - it would just mess up the dynamics a little bit.

Also, and it happens in most forums, where

¹ Dudu Ndlovu is a Black Radical Feminist and Fallist.



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the chair has to summarise what someone has said, and it happens often and I have done it before and seen other chairs do it before, where the chair uses their own bias and powers of chair to sort of purposely miscommunicate the point which lends itself towards what you wanting to push in that space. It's like a convincing tool. Chairs would sometimes be chosen because of their power of oration and they would speak unnecessarily. So when summarizing someone's point you don't basically need to speak longer than them. And particularly when men were chairing there was this idea of mansplaining - I mean, I have already been pretty clearly articulated and then it still needs to be legitimized and validated by the chair - either because they are well articulate, either because they a man and take a lot of space. either because they trying to push their own mandate - either way it's important for the chair to not take more space than they need to. It's also kinda important that the chair be as

invisible as possible in the space, to allow a natural flow and help keep the space safe and direct the conversation that it stays safe.

RT: *One of the things that was picked up was that the plenaries/meetings always took a circular shape or form and even when the architecture of the space/room didn't allow for it, things were deliberately rearranged to accommodate this.*

DN: Exactly, no rows, and no one sitting behind each other and someone in front, definitely not. - the chair must have nothing to do with scribing or standing in front with a whiteboard marker and also writing down points, because obviously they literally can choose in terms of what goes onto the board.

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Karabo FM:016 974 1909
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UCT Radio:021 650 5399
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Zibonele FM
(Khayelitsha):021 361 7109
Whale Coast Radio:028 312 2314

Organisations Contact Details

Compiled by Ruach Slayen & Rouen Thebus

Access2Justice (Access to Justice Association of South Africa)

NPO, voluntary association of professionals engaged in all aspects of legal and social justice.

- Sheena Jonkers (084) 377 3340
sheena@accesstojustice.co.za
- Tracey Lomax (083) 556 9644

Email: students@accesstojustice.co.za

Twitter: @ATJ4Students

Amnesty International South Africa

Focus includes rights of marginalised persons and groups, and accountability and monitoring of state resources and institutions. Offices in:

- Johannesburg (011) 283 6000

Email: info@amnesty.org.za

Twitter @AmnestySARO

Black lawyers Association

- (073) 695 5298 – (072) 169 7757

blaonline.org.za

blasc.org.za

info@blaonline.org.za

info@blasc.org.za

Twitter: @BLAsc_NEC

Equal Education

- Cape Town (021) 361 0127

info@equaleducation.org.za

equaleducation.org.za/

Twitter: @equal_education

Gift of the Givers

Disaster response NGO that offers aid including food and medical supplies, equipment and personnel. Offices in:

- Pietermaritzberg (Head Office) (033) 345 0163 - (033) 345 0175 (082) 872 3811 - (083) 600 1426 - Toll Free Number: 0800 786 777
- Johannesburg (011) 832 1546 - (011) 832 1563 - (083) 667 7179
- Cape Town (021) 704 0130 - (021) 704 0295 - (083) 661 3035
- Durban (031) 208 2312 - (031) 208 2315 - 082 657 3113

Twitter @GiftoftheGivers

Lawyers for Human Rights

- Cape Town (021) 424 8561
- Johannesburg (011) 339 1960

lhr.org.za/

@LHR_SA

LRC (Legal Resources Centre)

Organisation of over 65 lawyers and staff who offer legal services from four regional offices in:

- Johannesburg (National Office) (011) 836 9831)
- Cape Town (021) 481 3000
- Durban (031) 301 7572
- Grahamstown (046) 622 9230

Twitter: @LRC_SouthAfrica

Public Protector

- Pretoria (Head Office) (012) 366 7000 - (012) 366 7112 - (012) 366 7116
- Cape Town (021) 366 7108

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Right2Know

NGO whose campaigns include working to

protect and advance the right to protest.
National Coordinator: Mark Weinberg,
mark@r2k.org.za

Offices in:

- Cape Town (Head Office) (021) 447 1000
- Durban (031) 260 2825 - (083) 498 1583
- Johannesburg (011) 339 1533 - (078) 594 8962

Twitter: @r2kcampaign

SERI (Socio-Economic Rights Institute)

NPO, provides legal advice and representation, research services and advocacy support. Offices in:

- Johannesburg (011) 356 5860

Email: sanele@seri-sa.org

Twitter @SERI_RightsSA

Social Justice Coalition

- Cape Town (021) 361 0298

sjc.org.za/

info@sjc.org.za

Twitter: @SJCoalition

Social Justice Initiative

- (011) 759 4221

sjj.org.za/index.html

info@sjj.org.za

Twitter: @SocialJusticeSA

Sonke Gender Justice

- Cape Town (021) 423 7088

genderjustice.org.za/

info@genderjustice.org.za

Twitter: @SonkeTogether

Surplus People Project

- Cape Town (021) 448 5605

spp.org.za/

spp@spp.org.za

Twitter: @SurplusPP

CREDITS

Co-ordination and fundraising: Brian Ihirwe Kamanzi

Layout and editing: Patrick Schuster, Rouen Thebus and Aisha Hamdulay

Interviewers & Researchers: Rouen Thebus, Ru Slayen, Nyiko Maroleni, Aaliyah Veyaj, Simon Rakei, Aisha Hamdulay

Photography and doodles: Rabia Abba Omar, Nishal Kotecha Robb, Leila Khan, Jimi Matthews, Zara Julius

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Contact us at: pathwaystoedu@gmail.com