

## Article

# Hashtagged and Black? A South African Black Theological Engagement from Stellenbosch with Contemporary Student Movements

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**Abstract:** Hashtag movements, also amongst contemporary student movements, present a new charge towards decolonization. This also happens at the Faculty of Theology of Stellenbosch University. The group also identified as a Black collective. This contribution argues that this charge is therefore at a deeper level, directed at older generations of Black theologians, and this is assessed critically through a reading of some proponents of third-generation South African Black theologians. It is concluded that there needs to be a conscious nurture of creative tension and challenge, transformative encounters to decolonize theological education in Africa.

**Keywords:** hashtag activism; student movements; Black theology; higher education

## 1. The Challenge from Stellenbosch

Hashtag movements became one of the most prominent sites of struggle over the last decade or two. They emerged as a platform to connect and form new social movements, most dramatically during what became known popularly as the “Arab Spring”<sup>1</sup> (2010–2011) and later amongst others as the #BlackLivesMatter, #OccupyWallStreet, and #MeToo campaigns. Jackson et al. (2020, p. xxviii) defines hashtag activism as:

the strategic ways counter-public groups and their allies on Twitter employ this shortcut to make political contentions about identity politics that advocate for social change, identity redefinition, and political inclusion.

Higher-education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa and also Stellenbosch have also experienced this form of engagement over the last few years. Here, it is fundamentally about decolonizing education in Africa. Most prominent of these expressions is the #FeesMustFall student movement, operating at its height between 2015 and 2016. Ashwin Thyssen (2022, p. 89), a participant in this movement and now lecturer at the Faculty of Theology of Stellenbosch University, posits that it is “the most popular youth political movement post-1994 [in South Africa]”.

Irrespective of whether one agrees with Thyssen, it is important to ask how to respond as administrator—theologian to this, perhaps a prophetic voice of our time, in particular those administrators (like me) that have been influenced by South African Black theology. As the current dean at the Faculty of Theology and at Stellenbosch University since November 2017, it would of course be possible to tabulate various accomplishments as a faculty—showing the numbers to counter the charge of these movements. This is a real temptation: in this type of position, there are material interests—as well as accrual from a middle-class status as a professor—a fair amount of cultural capital to be gained from these reports. However, numbers (and reports) do not always count and will not be the focus of this contribution. The deeper question is how an institution like a faculty of theology at SU would discern its call theologically, reflecting on the charge from its students to decolonize. This is particularly so for a faculty and university such as the one at Stellenbosch University, with its own well-known history and context, mired in white



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supremacy and Dutch Reformed religious hegemony. The question one needs to ask, by virtue of this positionality, would be whether those who self-identify as proponents of Black theology and in administrative positions at these institutions are still organically embedded and in dialogue with the real struggles of the poor, and specifically in the context of South Africa, the struggles of poor Black communities. One may also refer to the self-critical reflections, especially of [Motlhabi \(2008, pp. 13–15\)](#), and later also the references by [Tshaka and Makofane \(2010, p. 245\)](#), to the “hiring out” to the academe and the risks involved. Does this tradition still “color” our decision making? Mere awareness of this positionality and ambiguity, but also a shallow “theoretical” engagement, can lull one to escape liability and renege on our call towards social justice.

In this contribution, I hope to present a critical yet constructive engagement of these questions. How do I propose to do this? The article starts by delving more deeply into the dynamics of the prominent hashtag movements from students in South Africa, and specifically Stellenbosch, and their context. I then relate this critically to a reflection on the South African Black theology tradition, especially in what became known as the third phase or generation starting more or less in the late 1980s through to the 1990s. While [Kritzinger \(1988, pp. 58–84\)](#) refers to different “phases”, [Motlhabi \(2008, pp. 12, 15; 2012, pp. 223–33\)](#) prefer to speak of “generations” or “stages” (p. 25), indicating that the Black theology movement in South Africa was complex and never a unitary, homogeneous voice. While this third phase was a time of transition, it also set in motion the trajectory of South African Black theology that continues to this day. I do this to assess its validity and also the validity of the critique from the student movements. Lastly, I hope to illustrate how the insights from this engagement can inform policymaking.

While reference is made to the journey at Stellenbosch University and its Faculty of Theology, the heart of the engagement in this contribution, will however be to bring the charge of contemporary grassroots, hashtag student movements to bear on this Black theology tradition. How do these movements challenge this religious tradition towards a deepening and broadening of their scope—especially as a contribution towards decolonizing theological education in Africa? I start with two movements embodying this charge from hashtag movements.

## 2. Two Moments, One Movement . . .

There are at least two moments<sup>2</sup> instigated by hashtag student movements that keep haunting me theologically and frame my theoretical engagement and contribution, at least over the last 5–6 years. In previous work ([Nel 2015, pp. 545–57; 2017, pp. 202–9](#)), I noted that one cannot simplistically cast this movement as a homogeneous uniform campaign. Different campuses evoked specific focus areas for specific campaigns and different phases and moments, whether it be rape culture, outsourcing of support personnel, language, or cultural exclusion, etc. The genealogy of these moments therefore needs to be seen within this earlier framework, which was informed by the voices and reflections of the agents themselves.

The first moment happened while I was still teaching theology at the University of South Africa (Unisa) in the city of Tshwane. It was a sunny Thursday in October 2016 when thousands of students marched through the city center and descended on the grass in front of the Union Buildings. These grand old Union Buildings are where the offices of the president and the cabinet are housed. This day, these offices were barricaded with a strong show of force by the security forces. The students demanded under the popular hashtag that #FeesMustFall. In a gradual buildup over months, from the #RhodesMustFall or simply #RMF campaign at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2015 ([Thyssen 2022, p. 94](#)), which focused on removing the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, a benefactor to that institution, yet also a much-hated symbol of colonization and imperialism for these student activists, they now turned their attention to the economic dimension of their struggle ([Nel 2017, pp. 206–8; Thyssen 2022, pp. 93–94; Mlambo 2022, pp. 109–12](#)). This new focus, renamed the #FeesMustFall campaign, largely driven from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), gained momentum in 2016, culminating in this march.

In solidarity, I joined the march. I parked my car close to the centrally located Church Square, from where the march would start. As I joined the march, there was initially an excitement in the air—almost a carnival atmosphere, with lots of boisterous singing, cheering, smiling and dancing. Even some police officers joined in the festivities. Students from various universities and colleges came, with buses parked at various locations, and throngs joined from different streets to form a mass descending on the grass lawns, excited and in anticipation of transforming the world in their generation. Several of my academic and administrative colleagues, from at least Unisa, were also there showing their solidarity. Rumors spread through the crowd that the president at the time, Jacob G Zuma, with ministers and high-ranking officials of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), were in a closed meeting with various vice-chancellors and representatives of student representative councils (SCRs) on the demands of the “fallists”, a name coined by themselves to describe the collective of student movements at the time. It was also expected that the president would address the students after the meeting. Things, however, turned sour later, as this promise did not come to fruition and the anger of students reached boiling point in clashes with police in the streets, lasting until late that night. Rekgotsofentse Chikane (2018, p. 185) described the explosion that followed as “throwing a Molotov cocktail into a paraffin container”.

Subsequently, the four different deans of the faculties of theology in South Africa (including Stellenbosch), all white males from the broader Dutch Reformed Church tradition at the time<sup>3</sup>, responded to this. They released a statement on 6 October 2016 on what they called, “the current student unrest on the #FeesMustFall” issue”, where they, in five points, basically condemned and dismissed the movement, calling for patience and calm<sup>4</sup>. They lamented, “our academic heritage is under threat” and they appealed to theological values such as “righteousness, fairness, compassion, reconciliation and peace. . .”.

A few of us, as what we called ourselves at the time, “engaged theologians” as well as other “concerned theologians, inspired by our heritage of prophetic engagement in public life”, had consultations mostly in and around Pretoria, in opposition to the deans, pledging our solidarity with the student movements. Arising from our engagement and consultations, we released a statement: “A call for critical engagement”<sup>5</sup>. We aimed at stimulating a process of reflecting on and with the student leaders, some of which were our theological students, inviting a bigger movement for “free, quality and decolonized education, ultimately envisioning a more humane society”. The statement followed a structure of acknowledging (“We acknowledge . . .”), mourning, confessing, affirming, committing, and pleading. As an opening framing, we acknowledged the reality of the “deep pain, disappointment, anger and frustration of black students in particular”. This initial statement was endorsed subsequently by more than 150 colleagues as part of what we called, “an invitation to an ongoing conversation . . .”.

Another moment happened earlier, on 4 April 2016 in what is colloquially known as the “Stellenbosch Kweekskool” [Stellenbosch Seminary] which housed amongst other organizations the faculty of theology of Stellenbosch University, the faculty where I was to become dean a year after this incident. An anonymous group of students, presumably mostly from the faculty, entered the building at night and removed all the pictures of the various (all-white) year groups off the walls, laying it out on the floor. They self-consciously identified themselves as the “Black Theological Collective” and left messages that called for decolonization and the transformation of this faculty of the university. In response to this action, the faculty specifically decided upon what they called, an *Indaba*<sup>6</sup> on 29 July 2016. In another publication, I go into more depth on this journey (Nel 2021, pp. 226–27) and the consequences, but in essence, it meant that previous impulses for the transformation of the faculty received here, a much stronger challenge and push not from the top—now directly from its own students who self-identified as a Black collective. It meant that a particular Black theological understanding of the notion of transformation as decolonization had to be responded to and appropriately operationalized; the faculty put some processes in place.

In short, as I explained in the previous chapter (Nel 2021, pp. 2019–40), the Faculty Board established two task teams. One task team would attend to what was subsequently called “visual redress”, while the other on the vexing question of the sustainability of the parallel medium language plan (p. 227)—it was the matter of language. It also needs to be mentioned that the Faculty Board’s standing committee responsible for academic programs, the Programme Committee, was also to investigate the “contextualization” of the existing BTh programme. In the February Faculty Board meeting of 2017, reference was also made to matters like “decolonizing” and “Africanising theology” and that the “appropriation of the Transformation Plan of SU adopted in January 2017 will receive priority within the FT”. These responses took place within a broader frame.

### 3. The Charge of Younger Generations

During the period 2016–2017, during the aftermath of the hashtagged movements, universities in South Africa intensely reviewed their demography, curriculum and ultimately, their role in society. This was also the case for Stellenbosch University and its faculties. One can see it from the ambiguous and preliminary shifts referred to above taking place in one faculty (Fataar and Costandius 2021). From its policies, this university argues that transformation is a systemic process and that it enhances sustainability, but also transformation is key to how universities like SU affect societies—transformation *through* its faculties<sup>7</sup>. This impacts on its core functions, namely, teaching, learning and assessment, as well as its research and social impact or choices of (social) partnerships. Transformation, it was argued, and from what we have seen in the faculty of theology, affects the demographics of the student body (transformative student experience), but also the staff composition (employment equity) and play a key role in creating a welcoming interior in the faculty (visual redress), as referred to earlier. This positions universities and faculties well and ensures (financial) sustainability.

It could be argued that these shifts are part of a wider matrix—a broader shift taking place in higher education globally. Universities in South Africa were also challenged during this period by their own hashtags and black students to “decolonize” themselves (Chikane 2018; Habib 2019). The two moments articulate and embody this challenge, related directly to each other—two moments, one movement. The charge from the hashtag student movement is one source from which the (Stellenbosch) Black Theological Collective drew its inspiration and emerged. The other (at least from its self-identification) is some association with Black theology. The inspiration of the hashtag student movement in South Africa, in particular those who morphed from #RhodesMustFall to the #FeesMustFall student movement towards transformation, was more than merely prompting for a corporate turn-around for the sake of (financial) sustainability, public relations or for climbing up in global ranking tables. One must with integrity, acknowledge, listen, and respond to the charge (and often, the rage!) of these (our) hashtagged and black youth voices. They are clear and radical: indeed, their charge towards institutions to decolonize was not a prompt towards corporate managerialism with some cosmetic shifts; it came from a much longer history and stands self-consciously in a particular youth political tradition and culture (Thyssen 2022, p. 93). Therefore, it was primarily a lament against the older generation who are now holding the reins of this transition, including the administrators from the Black theology heritage. Rekgotsofentse Chikane, son of struggle veteran and later director in the presidency of the Thabo Mbeki Administration, Rev. Frank Chikane explains,

This spirit of the ANCYL [African National Congress Youth League-RWN] speaks to the spirit among South African youth characterized by antagonism, disruption and respectful disrespect of those who hold the title elder in our country. . . . This spirit is the ability to create self-aware generations who chafe against the restraint and moderation of their elders, distancing themselves from their parents and speaking of themselves as ‘the youth of South Africa’. It takes an antagonistic stance against those we consider elders. It is a spirit that inspired Anton Lembede, the first president of the African National Congress. It fueled the writings of Bantu Stephen

Biko, the son of Black Consciousness, and Robert Sobukwe, founder of the Pan-Africanist Congress and the man who dared to defy the ANC. (Chikane 2018, p. 53)

This charge was threefold. In the first place, they argued that the older generations “sold out” the revolution by becoming part of the elite class, as they served in administration or at least parading as card-waving members of the governing (center-left) party, the African National Congress. Secondly, they showed that these older generations (the 1976 generation in particular) would harp back (superficially) to outdated rhetoric and hollow platitudes, informed by mere nostalgia. This nostalgia, they argue, is simply not prophetic anymore; it is a tragic symptom of their impotence to address the economic inequalities, worse still, in some sinister way, a conscious political strategy to muzzle genuine critique or to mislead the public. This then leads to the critique thirdly, that these older generations do not take seriously the voice and agency of the younger generations, despite their lip-service to the 1976 generation. I unpack these subsequently.

#### *Older Generations “Sold Out” the Revolution*

It is not too difficult to show how many former proponents of Black theology “graduated” into administrative positions in higher education institutions in Africa, either as deans, vice-deans, directors and senior executives, etc., in the public and private sector. Some (of us) are now even vice-chancellors (VCs) and deputy vice-chancellors (DVCs) of universities running big budgets and earning substantive middle-class salaries and benefits. Motlhabi himself surmises that this is perhaps the reason for the silence of Black theology since the 1990s. He laments,

There has been no major seminars or conferences on Black Theology in South Africa since 1996. Nor have there been any significant or groundbreaking publications since then. This is regrettable in view of the changes that have taken place in the country since the fall of apartheid and the 1994 democratic elections. It is also regrettable in the light of the new social issues that require urgent theological, especially theological-ethical, reflection and response.

One reason for this lapse of activity is that many veteran black theologians have left academic work and taken up administrative positions. This trend is not conducive to continuing with any serious and enduring academic pursuits (Motlhabi 2008, p. 13).

Rekgotsofentse Chikane, however, makes an important distinction and therefore riles against the ruling party not because it was in positions of power, but rather in how it failed to transform the status quo. He states, referring to themselves as “coconuts”,

We are the new generation of ‘clever blacks’—a term often reserved for the black elite of the country who, by questioning the ANC, are deemed to have turned their backs on the organization. . . Coconuts’ discontent with the ANC stems largely from the organisation’s lack of urgency in tackling the status quo.

He continues later,

“Using our proximity to the 1652s, we began to learn how best to disrupt the way they conceptualize the country and, as a result, their complicity in the maintenance of the status quo, the educational and economic prospects of their children and their reliance on the country’s democratic institutions to mask the injustices of the past”.

Older generations harp back (superficially) to outdated rhetoric and platitudes.

The hashtag movement argues that much of the responses from older generations, what they call, the “1976 generation”, got stuck either in rhetorical techniques that silence critique or still fighting old battles that do not consider the complexity of the contemporary struggle against oppression. In this regard, it is posited that the intersectional ideological orientation was missed. Thyssen explains about the movement:

In fact, most fundamental to the orientation of the student movement was the notion of intersectionality, as coined by Crenshaw. Intersectionality is the recognition that oppression is an interlocked system that affects different people in



differing ways depending on their identity markers (Carbado et al. 2013, p. 303). The #MustFall movement, then, in rather profound ways sought to focus on the experiences of university and national life while recognizing the ways in which black, women's and LGBTI+ lives are marked by precarity. (Thyssen 2022, p. 95)

Chikane explains this intersectional orientation, through a series of encounters within the movement, between male and women student leaders, trans and queer activists within #FeesMustFall. The role of leaders like Thenjiwe Mswane, Wanelisa Xaba and Nompandolo Mkhathshwa, but also members from the transgender community, like Sandile Ndelu and Thato Pule became more pronounced (Chikane 2018, p.193).

Thyssen therefore proposes what he calls a contemporary intersectional Black theology, which "must assert to conceive of itself as feminist and internationalist . . . it would intentionally address the oppressive forces that shape the lives of blacks, women, the LGBTI+ and other oppressed bodies whose lives are rendered precarious". (Thyssen 2022, p. 100).

Mlambo (2022, p. 113) in turn also challenge simplistic notions about justice and argues that, in particular, through the #RhodesMustFall iteration, the "youth" as she would sometimes call them, "had a conviction with regards to unequal social relations in their space", and emphasizes therefore what she calls, the "spatial consciousness that mirrors God's worlds towards inclusive spatial living". In this regard, she asserts:

Youth are the innovators of social relation in society. With social media, social constructs and freedoms being constructed, destructed and reconfigured by youth in today's world, the youth are the best group to form further tenets and expressions of the theology of spatial justice . . . youth are the centre of a furthered theology of spatial justice, with their inherent innovation and constant questions. (pp. 113–14)

It would therefore be critical to take up these challenges of intersectionality and spatial justice in the discourse on Black theology in South Africa. However, this does not mean that these articulations were taken seriously at the time or later. There was a third lamentation:

Older generations do not take seriously the voice and agency of the younger generations.

Chikane tells in detail the story of how on 21 October 2015, he was part of the masses of students protesting outside the parliament buildings in Cape Town, which have chilling commonalities with the narrative of the moment in the City of Tshwane. He however makes this point about their experience in Cape Town, on the day.

Meanwhile parliament continued with its session in a business-as-usual manner even though thousands of students were right there outside the doors pleading for them to listen to them. I remember thinking to myself that many of those who were inside parliament had once called themselves struggle heroes. So much for that, I guess. (Chikane 2018, p. 173)

This pleading "outside the doors", on this day, was later met with brutal police violence and arrests of students, including himself. There was no acknowledgment of the voices of the movement. In more protest actions later the same month in Johannesburg, in the shadow of the Luthuli House, which is the powerful headquarters of the ruling party in South Africa, the African National Congress, Chikane narrates the response of then secretary-general, Gwede Mantashe, as the students, were, seated on the ground, demanding that he came down from the stage to sit amongst them,

Unlike VC's across the country, Mantashe's initial refusal to leave the stage and meet students on the ground was not because he was afraid of the protesters; it was a flexing of political strength. In his eyes, he would not be told to sit down by a couple of children.

Chikane then describes the (power) play, as Mantashe eventually did come down (from the stage) to meet the student leaders and received the memorandum, yet he refused to sit down on the floor with them, as demanded by the crowd.

These instances or powerplay were part of the drama of the moments. The fundamental question that drives this engagement was how one revisits (reframes) these moments and the theological reflections that need to follow the wake of these. I do it by drawing on the heritage of South African Black theology, especially during the phase of the transition between the late 1980s and the 1990s, often referred to as the third phase or third generation of South African Black theology. How can the work of proponents of Black theology during that phase, like Tinyiko Maluleke, Itumeleng Mosala, Bonganjalo Goba, Mokgethi Mothlabi, Russel Botman, Nico Koopman and others, remain relevant and perhaps provide a hermeneutical lens to understand and assess this charge, as well as the critical reflection by engaged theologians, that accompanied this movement? How would an appropriate response look in terms of the real praxis in decolonizing higher educational institutions—or are we also still “selling out”, as we speak?

#### 4. A Black Theological Engagement

In his work on developing, what he calls, a “Transforming Public Theology, Nico Koopman (2015, p. 213), now Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel at Stellenbosch University, relates this directly to “drinking from the wells of black theology”. Being dean (my predecessor) at the time, he narrates how many layers of communities (“these people . . .”) practiced a transformative public theology as they:

... reflected upon the meaning of faith in the triune God when they realized that in a pluralistic, democratic society, the old ethos of uniformity at every cost and intolerance of alternative views does not suffice, and that new ways of dealing with plurality and ambiguity need to be explored. These people practiced a transforming public theology of hybridity when they realized that the meaning of God’s love for this world cannot merely be described in theological language of vision and criticism, but that new ways to engage with public life from the perspective of faith in the triune God of love need to be formulated.

This understanding in many ways is the way that administrator-theologians attend to their task and he grounds it in Black theology. Vuyani Vellem, the late director at the Center for Public Theology at the University of Pretoria, however shows that the introduction of the notion of “public theology” or even Koopman’s (Vellem 2012, pp. 406–11) proposal for a “transformative public theology” was not without its controversies. Koopman indeed argues for drinking from the wells of Black theology, but as Vellem argues, it is not so evident how Koopman engages the whole array of Black theology and its deeper debates in the development of his transformative public theology<sup>8</sup>. A more nuanced engagement is called for. In this regard, Mokgethi Motlhabi (2012, pp. 223–33), who served as director of the School of Humanities at the University of Pretoria, identifies roughly five phases in the development of Black theology in South Africa, of which I would argue that his fifth phase coincide with what I earlier called the third wave. Mothlabi explains:

The fifth and last phase of BTSA [Black Theology in South Africa—RWN], at this point, is quite elusive, perhaps even nonexistent. It is not clear whether this is only a temporary lull in theological activity, a temporary retreat for the sake of recovery or the end mistakenly implied by the title of Kee’s book<sup>9</sup>.

For Mothlabi, theology in general was in disarray at the time and that was due to the shifts in the 1990s in South Africa. He posits that Black theology, during that phase and after that, had to find (develop) a new paradigm “a paradigm that will address itself to the multiple present day-evils, such as ongoing poverty, slumdwelling, the inadequate social services still prevailing in black communities . . .” (Motlhabi 2012, p. 230). He then continues to argue that there need to be a synergy between African Theology and Black theology (See also Motlhabi 1994, pp. 113–41), perhaps even an amalgamation. In fact, Tinyiko Maluleke understands it that Mothlabi suggests that Black theology are to lose its name in favor of African theology (Maluleke 1995, p. 1). In his argument, Maluleke (1996) points to, what he calls “much projective thinking and anxiety among African theologians”,

due to the collapse of the former USSR and the demise of apartheid in South Africa. He, however, agrees with Mothlabi (Maluleke 1995, p. 3) that the nineties presented a new (and different) space and he warns tellingly,

Although the Reconstruction and Development Programme is aimed at the general upliftment of the country and its citizens, the ‘reconstruction’ of structures and physical ‘development’ alone will not quench our cultural and spiritual thirst. On the contrary, the apparent heavy emphasis on the material and the structural may simply result in the intensification of Black frustration. We do not just need jobs and houses, we must also recover ourselves. Culture, like religion, is therefore an important issue of our times.

The challenge was to hold both a sociopolitical analysis and cultural analysis in critical tension. The cultural is also political. However, Maluleke (1995, pp. 19–22) continues to delve into the crisis, also from within, and here one finds resonances with the charge from the most recent hashtag movements. In a section under the title “Voices from within”, he refers to the limitations of the job descriptions of academic institutions, the accusations of “betraying the revolution”, its supposedly party-political captivity (as the “religious desk of Azapo”), and finally, that it remains locked, stuck in the past (p. 20). His early insights into the process of “deepening” Black theology in relation to the complexity of ideological plurality, but also sources—in particular the question “What is meant by the ‘black community’” as an interlocutor, the relevance of what he calls “class-based categories” (an earlier reference to intersectionality, one could argue) and also lastly, in the growing interest in African independent churches and traditional culture and religion, is critical as an earlier recognition of the complexity of the moment.

It is evident from the above that Black theology in the third wave have in some ways pre-empted the growing contradictions in a (neo-liberal) transformation agenda in policymaking level, devoid of any serious engagement with race, class, gender and culture. While there is sensitivity to the pluralistic and democratic shifts, the new space, at least in theory, it cannot therefore be said that it wholly abandoned (“sold out”) the revolution.

The charge that they did not listen to the agency and voices of newer generations of activists still hold. But this charge could also be turned on its head: did the younger cohort, especially those who self-identify as a Black (theology) collective, in their quest for decolonization listened and read the third generation at all? Be that as it may, one needs to hold that this tension, discomfort and uneasy exchange is healthy and critical for new iterations of transformation, for the ongoing challenge of decolonization. It is in this creative tension that the new terrain of struggle is fought and it impacts policy making, as well as the depth of theological engagements. Administrators in institutions in Higher Education, particularly those who drank from the wells of Black theology, may indeed reframe this as a sign of life and hope—the source for decolonization from and for Africa.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> While the term “Arab Spring” became the popular term for this movement, it could also be argued that it stemmed from youth protest movements in Tunisia and Egypt primarily and therefore was actually a “North African Spring”.
- <sup>2</sup> My usage of the concept “moments” in this context should not suggest that I reduce these movements to certain events. Rather, I hope to use it as one entry point (insertion) into the actual real-time performances of these movements. These moments are chosen subjectively, as they remain central to the challenge they pose.



- <sup>3</sup> Hendrik L Bosman, an Old Testament scholar, was acting dean at the Faculty of Theology in Stellenbosch at the time. The other deans were Johan Buitendag (University of Pretoria), Fanie Snyman (University of Free State) and Franscois Viljoen (acting dean, Northwest University).
- <sup>4</sup> Press statement: Deans of Theology, [https://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-theology-and-religion/news/post\\_2367794-press-statement-deans-of-theology](https://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-theology-and-religion/news/post_2367794-press-statement-deans-of-theology) [Accessed: 15 July 2022].
- <sup>5</sup> A Call for Critical Engagement—Study Document, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zIAKtKhIPDy9WYMY3BCmNwR5UHnwQD6kKKGH7TCvkFg/pub> [Accessed: 15 July 2022].
- <sup>6</sup> The colloquial meaning of the Nguni word “Indaba” is a gathering where the king calls together a council of wise elders to decide on important matters.
- <sup>7</sup> See the Stellenbosch University Transformation Plan (2017).
- <sup>8</sup> See also the critique of Urbaniak (2016, pp. 495–538); however, the focus of this article is limited to the dialogue with proponents of South African Black theology.
- <sup>9</sup> The title of the book that Mothlabi refers to is *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology*.

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