SUMMARY

As a result of Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder in 2019, protest action under the banner of #AmINext? manifested itself near the steps of Parliament in Cape Town. When masses of predominantly female marchers assembled wielding protest signs, vocally demonstrating against the scourge of gender-based violence ravaging the country, it could be argued that this marked a momentous contribution to the annals of South African history. Therefore, in this dissertation, I identify, explore and interpret the symbols, visual tropes and myths of the protest movement. For the purposes of thorough contexualisation, other women-led movements are also explored by primarily focusing on their visual meaning-making by unpacking select protest imagery. These include images from the famed Women's March of 1956, depictions of women in resistance photography during the apartheid era, as well as the intersectional feminist movements that mushroomed within the largely male-dominated spaces of #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall. In doing this, the study seeks to offer a detailed visual analysis examining what can be deduced from the tropes, symbols, and myths captured not only at the #AmINext? march, but throughout some of South Africa's most seminal protests advocating for women's rights.

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A visual analysis of 2019's #AmINext? movement

By

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In a recent statement discussing the crisis of gender-based violence (GBV) during COVID-19 lockdowns in South Africa the Executive Director of United Nations Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka laments, "Confinement is fostering the tension and strain created by security, health, and money worries. And it is increasing isolation for women with violent partners, separating them from the people and resources that can best help them. It's a perfect storm for controlling, violent behaviour behind closed doors" (2020:1). Her utterances grimly underpin this violent scourge that predates the pandemic, but has worsened within the period of COVID, and the statistics paint an equally grisly picture. Not too long ago, it was reported that the number of GBV distress calls to law enforcement saw a significant spike going from 12,000 to approximately 80,000 by the third week of South Africa's nationwide lockdown. What is even scarier about these reports is that statistically speaking, officially reported cases of GBV actually seemed to dip during this time, indicating a lack of access to essential policing services (ASSAf Standing Committee on Health 2020:2).

When listening to or reading about the haunting experiences borne by our country's women, it quickly becomes evident that something in our society is horribly amiss. When you turn on the news, it is a ceaseless barrage of news bulletins reporting on the most recent violent act perpetrated against South Africa's female population. Twitter and Facebook feeds are constantly strewn with harrowing accounts by women seeking a safe platform to expose their abusers or just in search of some compassionate support, as there is a considerable chance it was not offered by their family unit, or worse yet, the arms of the South African justice systems such as the police. There is a warranted air of distrust, anger and vexation in South African news reportage and social media responses. Consequently, the country has witnessed an upswing in protest movements spearheaded by women in South Africa, which necessitates a careful analysis of the rhetoric of the protest marches.

With this in mind, the scope of the study will primarily be focussed on the visual analysis of #AmINext?, a pivotal protest campaign that took place in 2019. A key objective of this study is to analyse the protest imagery of the #AmINext? march to parliament. To this end, through a semiotic and hermeneutic analysis, I investigate the visual tropes and myths of the protest movement. #AmINext was touted as one of the most pivotal protest events in recent South African history. However, the discourse around contemporary protest action in the country cannot be broached without mentioning the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests that dominated the tertiary education discourse around the mid-2010s. This will include a visual analysis centred on the representations of female students adopting prominent leadership roles (as seen in Figure 1), and the internal conflict that ensued due to the disruption of male dominance during the protest movements. Moreover, the #AmINext? and #SAShutdown hashtags were used to mobilise the bodies of the thousands of women who attended the march, almost in the same vein as the body-political tactics utilised during the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements. For this reason, through a literature review, I offer an investigation of the body politics present in these separate marches and movements.

Acknowledging that my male perspective makes me susceptible to a myriad of blind spots concerning the important discourse around woman's issues, I personally saw it apt to take on a research topic that would offer me a more finely tuned perspective on the societal strain brought about through patriarchy.

Figure 1: #FeesMustFall protest leaders Shaeera Kalla and Nompendulo Mkatshwa at a march, Johannesburg, 2016. Photograph by Daylin Paul. (*Mail & Guardian*).

Figure 2: A sea of people at the protest march against femicide and gender-based violence outside Parliament, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Anso Thom. (*Daily Maverick*).

Figure 3: President Cyril Ramaphosa addressing all protesters in attendance after receiving their memorandum demands, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Anso Thom. (*Daily Maverick*).

Figure 4: At the end of the march, protestors place their posters, placards and flowers on parliament's fence, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Anso Thom. (*Daily Maverick*).

1.2 Background to the Study

Uyinene Mrwetyana, Leighandre Jegels, Zodwa Tyoloda, and Jess Hess; just some of the names of young South African women from different parts of the country who died within days of each other. In all cases, they experienced violent deaths at the hands of men (Lyster 2019). As heart wrenching as the other incidents were, the grim account of how a worker at the Clareinch Post Office decided to brutally rape and murder 19-year-old UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyana distinctly resonated with the nation and received extensive media coverage. In the wake of Mrwetyana's murder, the hashtags #SAShutdown and #AmINext? were spawned. A dialogue quickly spread on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, consequently galvanising a legion of rightfully jaded and incensed women and men to take an unequivocal stand against a pervasive climate of GBV. As seen in Figures 2 and 4, many of these marchers were displaying placards adorned with diverse slogans, as well as flowers at the protest site.

At the core of the messaging behind #AmINext? was the notion that being slain in cold blood could happen to any South African woman, and at any time, as Uyinene was murdered in broad daylight while running the type of mundane errand nobody would ever deem particularly dangerous or life-threatening (Morshedi 2020:9). With there being a recent string of similarly horrendous rapes and murders, the tragic, needless events of Saturday August 24th would ultimately serve as a catalyst for the #AmINext? march to parliament in Cape Town where a list of gender-based demands were received by President Cyril Ramaphosa (Figure 3). In response to the understandably riled up crowd, during his speech the president conceded that the status quo could no longer persist, even lamenting the harsh irony of this incident happening while women's month was being commemorated in August (Payne 2019:1). The protest images taken from the momentous march that was held just a few days after the funeral of Uyinene Mrwetyana are a representation of a significant sector of society rejecting the current state of affairs and taking government to task for failing to protect its citizens.

1.3 Need for the Study

In response to an ever-changing social shift towards the visual, renowned visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff (2019:13) observes how the upsurge in YouTube content creation and the uploading of visuals on social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat should not be interpreted as a global obsession with narcissism. On the contrary, rather than believing people are creating images in a superficial way, it is his assertion that this phenomenon likely has to do with a desire to reveal an image of one's situation if it is not being represented adequately

in their respective society. Those protesting about social injustice can undoubtedly be categorised as people who feel unseen and are not adequately represented. With protest action being somewhat of a hallmark in South Africa, there is a plethora of literature on the subject if one seeks it out (Lodge & Mottiar 2015:1). In other words, due to the country's oppressive history as well as the liberation movements it prompted, South Africa certainly has a longstanding kinship with the act of protesting. Similarly, academic texts available in relation to protest spearheaded by those from traditionally marginalised groups like women, those with disabilities and the LGBTQIA+ community, are also in abundance (Hackney 2016:2). However, in the case of the noteworthy #AmINext? protest of 2019, the literature available on this particular event is still quite scant as it is fairly recent. Therefore, the opportunity is ripe for a visual analysis of this protest movement as well as the topical discourse it inspires to be carried out.

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Intersectionality

The term intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989:140), relates to the convergence of multiple forms of oppression and exclusion that women, and particularly women of colour, are often subjected to which can manifest due to their race, gender, class, sexuality, or disability. Crenshaw (1989:139) purported that the subordination Black women live through is often more layered than that of those who may experience a special set of privileges due to their social standing and race. She also proclaimed that the feminist rhetoric espoused by white feminists at the time did not address the specific vulnerabilities of Black women by virtue of them being both women and Black in a predominantly white society that denigrated these characteristics (Crenshaw 1991:1244). In essence, this term illustrates how diverse and multi-dimensional social issues faced by women can become compounded once they intersect or overlap with one another. This is a situation that Julia Roth perceptively calls a "simultaneous entanglement of inequalities" (2013:2).

With the country still coming to grips with its own oppressive history, it should come as no surprise that South Africa is not immune to the pervasiveness of intersectional issues. The racist and classist teachings, laws and structures that were espoused through apartheid effectively spawned an insidious web of domination that the nation's women currently still bear the brunt of. GBV, the disproportionate power dynamic between men and women, persistent poverty in women-headed households, as well as a failure to meaningfully dismantle a patriarchal culture

all intertwine to the detriment of these South African women and the liberties they are entitled to (Allen 2018:42).

1.4.2 Feminist Activism

Relevant literature on the topic of feminist activism presents a rich tapestry of text to illuminate one's understanding. Treasured Black feminist, theorist, and activist, bell hooks (2000:2), has chronicled the history of feminism and how it not only shaped the earliest women's liberation movements, but also conscientised its followers about the shortcomings and injustices of male dominance. She also famously decried the marginalisation Black feminists encountered at the hands of the white counterparts within these movements. hooks (2000:3) took exception to such behaviour, as it innately distracted from abolishing their common foe; the destructive mechanism of patriarchy.

In the South African context, Gouws and Coetzee (2019:3) write about woman's activism post-1994, and how for a long period it had shifted from a more robust and direct approach, to one interested in engaging with institutional politics. This means its new objective was no longer primarily mobilising groups of disadvantaged and disgruntled women in the streets, but rather influencing the legislative and policy agenda related to the welfare of women and their intersectional issues. They do, however, note the return to the former more direct approach encompassed in the Women's March of 1956 that was re-imagined in the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests of 2016. Even more noteworthy was the strong, vocal female leadership at the helm of those protest movements (Gouws & Coetzee 2019:4). South African feminist literature also theorises that the feminist agenda, and the activism it is accompanied by, needs to be tirelessly waged due to patriarchy being one of the very few non-racial institutions in the country, adding to its ominous and far-reaching threat (Groenmeyer 2011:257). In other words, because the pervasive culture of male dominance can be found in a diverse range of communities and racial groups, the importance of dissecting feminist activism through an intersectional prism becomes more apparent.

Post-feminist theory has also played a pivotal role in anchoring the tenets that inform contemporary feminist movements. Post-feminism is concerned with upholding tropes of freedom and choice when it comes to young women across the world being entitled to assert their agency (McRobbie 2004:255). It should come as no surprise then, that recent history has seen a momentous and newly-energised wave of feminist activism. The literature documenting this evolution of feminism upholds the current spirit of defiance advocated by women as post-

feminism seeks comprehensively to scrutinise the portrayal and treatment of women in society, art, contemporary culture, the media, academia, and politics (Genz & Brabon 2009:2).

1.4.3 Protest Imagery

The emotional gravitas of an image can certainly play a central role in whether a visual message is deemed effective or not (Brantner *et al* 2011:523). Doerr *et al* (2013: 3) purport that the circulation of such images, especially in a protest setting, can assist in the acceleration of mass social mobilisation, further amplifying those behind social movements along with their plights. It is their assertion that this is not a new phenomenon as social movements have generally been intrinsically tethered to the visual portrayals of said movements. This visual messaging and framing can come about through a series of strategic efforts, or simply accidental means - like a random observer capturing an iconic shot during a protest (Doerr *et al* 2013:6). Furthermore, certain aesthetics and symbols within protest imagery have the ability to tear down linguistic and cultural barriers, further fostering a stronger sense of solidarity amongst participants, and potentially external observers, that can ultimately benefit the cause being advocated for (McGarry *et al* 2019:25). Building on this notion of valuable outcomes stemming from protest symbols, Axel Philipps (2012:4) argues that there is undoubtedly merit in dissecting slogan-filled banners and placards that are displayed at demonstrations. These slogans can, therefore, be observed as yet another method to broadcast commentary centred on pertinent social and political issues, and add a layer to the process of visually analysing protest images.

In effect, there is sufficient literature relating to the power an image is able to wield, and how this should never be downplayed because as Tina Askanius (2013:18) contends, "[a]n instant is arrested within a narrative flow and action condensed into a single image."

1.4.4 Body Politics within Protest Movements

When discussing the protest movements of marginalised groups who ventilate their frustrations through very visible means such as organised marches and sit-ins, the concept of body politics can undoubtedly be viewed as the apparatus that fuels said protests. According to Wendy Harcourt and Arturo Escobar (2002:11), body politics can be described as the politics surrounding the efforts of those struggling to gain or regain control of their bodies, whether it be in the governmental, social, cultural, or private spheres of their lives. Acclaimed theorist Judith Butler (2011:2) asserts that the driving force behind body politics is the degree to which

bodies collectively support each other once they have physically assembled for the purpose of a protest. This is further evidenced when she maintains that:

> We are not simply visual phenomena for each other – our voices must be registered, and so we must be heard; rather, who we are, bodily, is already a way of being "for" the other, appearing in ways that we cannot see, being a body for another in a way that I cannot be for myself, and so dispossessed, perspectivally, by our very sociality (Butler 2011:3).

The roots of Butler's bio-political writings cannot be glossed over either. In his book titled *Discipline and Punishment*, Michael Foucault (1975) develops the concept of body politics through unpacking the relationship between the body and the state's power when punishing inmates. He would later argue that the body is central in understanding the scope of power structures and how they discipline or have jurisdiction over bodies in society (Brown & Gershon 2017:1). This concept of the body would then serve as the framework for many feminist theorists trying to unpack how the female body in particular has previously been marginalised and controlled, and how this prejudice still occurs. When discussing Foucault, Carlson ascribes the following claims to him:

> The body is constructed by culture, which implies there is a natural body, a culturally neutral body, for culture to work upon. Culture and body are separable entities. And … the body is constituted by culture, which implies there is no natural body, no culturally neutral body for culture to work upon. Culture and body are inseparable entities (2008:75).

Therefore, the paradoxical nature of Foucault's understanding of the body is where Butler diverges from his school of thought. Through introducing the concept of materialisation, Butler (1993:1) asserts that the body materialises as result of cultural processes. In other words, it is dependent on conceptions, discursive practices and discourse that occupy the cultural sphere. Ultimately, Butler has used this framework to unpack the exclusion LGBTQIA+ bodies experience in heteronormative societies, the hate speech endured by marginalised bodies, as well the power present when these very bodies decide to assemble (Halsema, Kwastek, & van den Oever 2021:11). It is no wonder then that her writings have been so seminal when discussing contemporary feminist discourse and body politics that inform it. Consequently, Butler's understanding of gender through the lens of body politics would ultimately play a crucial role in shaping the ideology behind third-wave feminist activism[1] (Grady 2018).

In the South African context, the body-political nature of the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protest served as a way to amplify the grievances of those protesting.

[1] This form of feminism was primarily concerned with condemning the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in the workplace during the 1990s, as well as fighting for women to occupy more positions of power within a male-dominated society (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2005:15).

Through the collective strategies implemented by the protesting students on their respective campuses, as well as documenting and circulating the visual imagery on social media platforms, body politics quickly became a key component of these social movements as a whole (Knudsen & Andersen 2018:15).

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The discourse around the inner workings of women's issues within society, and in particular protests, is one that warrants a thorough understanding of the concepts generated by intersectionality and gender theory. Despite all women being subject to a host of disadvantages due to sexism and misogyny, the crux of intersectionality theory is to offer insight on the multitude of ways they can be vulnerable depending on how their respective forms of oppression and discrimination intersect (Angelucci 2017:5). According to Distiller and Steyn (2004:7), in the case of South Africa's history and the ideas of identity it forcibly imposed, even presently, each strand of these identities (whether it be in the form of race, gender, class etc.) has an unavoidable consequence on the other facets of one's identity. Thus, this theory is effective because it deals with the different forms of discrimination women face and providing a way to account for how they are uniquely positioned, often creating nuanced experiences in relation to a woman's race, age, class, sexuality and other individual characteristics.

With regard to gender theory in particular, the subject of patriarchy manifesting itself in contemporary social movements such as #FeesMustFall is inevitably part of the discussion as South Africa has a longstanding history with patriarchal traditions (Maseko 2017:27). These will therefore serve as appropriate theoretical foundations to unpack the protest movements South Africa has witnessed in response to acts of misogyny, sexism, and violence against women.

1.6 Research Methodology

The images referenced throughout this paper will largely be sourced from the hashtags #AmINext? and #SAShutdown on the platforms Twitter and Instagram as these were at the root of the robust mobilisation that consequently resulted in the mass-scale march outside parliament on 5 September 2019 (Morshedi 2020:7). As for why exactly online spaces such as Twitter and Instagram have been so effective in the current dispensation of youth-led movements in South Africa, there are numerous theories illustrating why social media is an effective tool for social mobilisation. Tanja Bosch and Bruce Mutsvairo (2017:74), for

example, assert that the local user base of both platforms has seen a steady uptick year on year leading to their dominant role in seminal protest movements such as #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall. Furthermore, they continue their argument by specifically emphasising the efficiency of Twitter due to the format of the information being disseminated. In essence, uploaded protest imagery accompanied by the succinct 140 characters of text all users are permitted enables tweets to be considerably effective mediums of communication as critical details can be shared not only between fellow protestors, but also with relevant figures within government as well as the mainstream media (Bosch & Mutsvairo 2017: 83).

Photography from online newspapers, such as the photo essay by Anso Thom published in the *Daily Maverick*[2], will also be utilised as contextual devices. Several elements within all these photographs collectively act as visual cues to highlight the plight of women in South African society, such as posters and placards containing ominously poignant messages responding to the culture of GBV, images of pain and suffering, and various symbols of solidarity. Additionally, protest imagery from other significant social movements surrounding social injustices will also be cited to further contextualise the magnitude of the aforementioned march, namely #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, and the Women's March of 1956.

According to Lawrence Neuman (2014:103), hermeneutics is a theory of meaning-making that is concerned with making sense of the obscure. He goes on to explain how hermeneutic research methodology is a process that encourages conducting an in-depth analysis of the text within the literature to form a deeper understanding of the topic being discussed (Neuman 2014:103). The researcher's subjective experiences are a key component in unpacking the meaning of the text. He or she is also required to make sense of the different sections of the text by relating them to the context of the text in its entirety (Neuman 2014:104). Hermeneutics, therefore, is a fitting methodology when critically analysing the dense theories my topic grapples with.

In relation to protest movements, Reis (2018:7) asserts that in order to understand the mechanism of a protest in an enriched and focussed lens, a hermeneutic analysis is the best suited method. And although hermeneutics has received criticism for its perceived lack of

[2] The *Daily Maverick* (DM) is a South African, privately owned media company that offers news, analysis, and investigative journalism through its news site and printed newspapers. According to a 2021 digital news report, DM's online activity accounted for 19% of the local news site traffic (Roper 2021).

practical guidelines, it is still a method that places some emphasis on curtailing one's assumptions and biases throughout the research process (Karter *et al* 2019:12).

Semiotics, which was most notably developed by structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, seeks to distinguish between the two facets of a sign/image, one concerned with the idea or concept (the signified), while the other with how the concept is expressed (the signifier). Gillian Rose (2016: 72) therefore contends that a semiotic analysis of images can often be a constructive technique in the process of decoding the meanings behind visuals.

Overall, the research requires a methodology that engages themes of conflict, patriarchy, and visual analysis. These are all themes that could potentially yield fruitful and critical insight through my own personal lens which is something hermeneutics allows for, as well as through critical semiotic analysis.

1.7 Chapter overview

Chapter 1, which serves as an introduction to the dissertation and provides a detailed summary of my research topic, as well as offering some insight on what this line of investigation could potentially add to the field of visual studies. The chapter also includes comprehensive accounts of the relevant literature consulted for the research, with themes relating to past and present gender-based protest movements, visual analysis of protest imagery, and the status of gender dynamics in the country. Through the analysis of the literature, the introductory chapter then asserts why my perspective on the topic analyses a space within social movements which is, for the most part, unexplored.

In Chapter 2, I contextualise South African women and their storied relationship with protesting and social movements through visual analysis. This is primarily chronicled and analysed through the images captured during the Women's March of 1956, and to a broader extent, the tropes often found in the resistance photography of apartheid.

An analysis of the feminist movements and discourses that mushroomed out of the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests is the basis of Chapter 3. This is accomplished by probing the visual components connected to the respective movements, and gauging their significance in relation to deep-rooted patriarchal structures in South African society. By doing this, additional context is offered with regard to the propensity for modern women in the country to vocalise their societal grievances through a variation of protest acts.

Through highlighting the #AmINext? protest of 2019, Chapter 4 dissects various text and images providing a picture of the responses South African women have to the violent experiences that afflict their everyday lives. All of this is explored in an attempt to offer a thorough critical analysis of the visual components of the protest by comprehensively describing the tropes, symbols and myths that are visualised in specific images captured at #AmINext?.

In the concluding chapter, a summation of all the perspectives and themes presented throughout all the chapters is given. As well as pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of some of the theories discussed in the essay, this chapter is comprised of suggestions in relation to the possible routes this topic could potentially take in the future which could, in turn, lead to the betterment of visual culture studies.

CHAPTER TWO:

PROTESTS OF OLD: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE THROUGH RESISTANCE PHOTOGRAPHY

2.1 Introduction

Given that the later chapters of this paper will be critically analysing online activism and the circulating of protest imagery on social media, it is imperative to offer some context to the historical practice of social documentary photography in South Africa. The country's liberation struggle has always been intrinsically linked to the discipline of photography, which is a detail that could possibly elude those unfamiliar with this history and accustomed to the digital age. Just as hashtags have become instruments to amplify the voices of those marginalised by repressive governments and other authoritative institutions, photography predating the post-apartheid South Africa we know today was an invaluable and, to a great extent, necessary tool in the dismantlement of the propagandist regime that was apartheid. In essence, photography as a means to inform and mobilise a global audience is not a new phenomenon. Photographers, photojournalists and editors who were part of the liberation struggle during the apartheid regime understood the gravity of a picture that perfectly encapsulated the horrors being perpetrated against the majority Black population. They also recognised those types of photographs that had the potential to spark meaningful change in the international community as it related to their disdain for the oppressive regime that was apartheid.

Those pioneers at the forefront of social documentary photography, such as members of the Afrapix collective, understood the sentiment of the above quote as they clearly defined how the images they produced would serve as means to resist the regime of the time. This visual shift would ultimately take hold amongst a multitude of photographers in apartheid South Africa. When discussing the most effective style of specifically capturing the brutality of the apartheid era, David Krantz (2008:6) gives an explanation relating to the term resistance photography (sometimes referred to as struggle photography). He essentially describes it as a genre of photography centred around documenting the conflict-ridden relationship between an oppressive force and that of its victims. David Krantz (2008), Patricia Hayes (2009), and Kylie Thomas (2012) have all extensively documented struggle photography and its invaluable significance in the resistance against apartheid's unjust policies.

The abovementioned photography is therefore rooted in politics, more specifically the political position of those who are undoubtedly downtrodden by those unfairly situated in positions of power and who choose to abuse said power. With the violence illustrated in these photographs on full display to both the international and local media, the goal is for the images to act as a catalyst for those still on the fence about the inhumane policies of the oppressive government finally to act. Apartheid was, of course, a system of oppression instituted and enforced by the National Party (NP) in 1948, and sought to subjugate and dominate its Black 'citizens' who accounted for the majority of South Africa's population (Krantz 2008:5). The word 'citizens' is a misnomer as Black South Africans were not granted the same rights as their fellow white countrymen, including the right to vote, own land, and free mobility in and around most sections of the country.

Before being on the receiving end of persistent global ire and condemnation, and finally relenting to the pressure of economic sanctions from the international community, the apartheid government ruled with impunity that was often captured by photographers. Armed only with camera lenses, and an impregnable conviction when it came to the undeniable human rights of all South Africans, these photojournalists in turn became the de facto ambassadors for the cause of the country's subjugated people. Whether it was the 1956 Women's March against pass laws, or the more tragic events that led to the Sharpeville massacre on the 21st of March 1960 these resistance or struggle photographers shed light on an exceptionally dark reality facing the Black masses of South Africa.

Therefore, the following section of this chapter will serve as a broad overview of the beginnings of resistance photography. Furthermore, an analysis on the defiant practises and tropes that came to define the visualisation of cruelties perpetrated under the NP's rule will also be offered. The Afrapix collective and some of its key proponents will be introduced, and their works examined during this analysis. Next, a discussion around the depiction of Black women in resistance photography will precede an essential section about the Women's March of 1956, as well as its identifiable tropes.

2.2 The history of resistance photography under apartheid

It should be noted that any Voices of dissent or resistance were promptly met with a crushing and disproportionate response from the ruling apartheid regime. The punishment meted out ranged anywhere from intimidation and harassment from the state, to incarceration, which was often accompanied by some form of torture, and in some cases even state-sanctioned murder

(Krantz 2008:292). The National Party (NP) consistently acted on its mandate to neutralise and suffocate any attempt to bolster resistance movements being propelled by those seeking to end its reign. By definition, this included photographers who had targets on their backs due to the revealing nature of their work. Therefore, the more emboldened resistance photography grew, the more of a hazardous occupation it became, with State Security forces consistently attempting to curtail the capturing and dissemination of what they deemed to be problematic images (Krantz 2008:292).

Censorship became a central tool for the apartheid government in the fight against this genre of photography. It was commonplace for struggle photographers to be under constant surveillance, often leading to a myriad of draconian consequences which included but were not limited to having their cameras confiscated, being detained, which included the possibility of receiving beatings while in custody. The destruction of photographic equipment was particularly detrimental as, in the absence of digital image making and the advent of cloud storage, this ensured the permanent erasure of the documented evidence. This pervasive culture of restrictive censorship was also largely permitted to thrive as most photojournalists did not possess access to strong and robust legal recourse (Krantz 2008:293). There have even been accounts of how prominent white photographers who were active during that particular era of defiance, like British-born Gille de Vlieg for example, were not immune to the potential of heavy-handed police violence of the state even though they occupied a higher social position than that of their Black counterparts (Thomas 2012:209). The absurdity of the apartheid government's blind obsession with media suppression and sanitising how the rest of the world would ultimately view the country's human rights practices is perfectly illustrated in the real story behind the image seen in Figure 5. The picture clearly displays a white officer forcefully dragging a Black man on the ground. Moments before this picture was taken, the man being dragged was shot by the police. This picture was included in a newspaper in the 1970s, however it was not immediately published by the news editor who had reservations about the message it communicated. Thus, the photographer lied and purported that the Black man was simply being whisked away to safety by the police officer after almost being attacked by a crowd of riotous protesters. In the wake of the photograph being published, the government's main complaint was that the on-duty officer is seen with a cigarette in his mouth which could have potentially created a negative perception of law enforcement (Furlong 2016).

Figure 5: Man being dragged by police officer during a protest, Gugulethu, 1976. Photograph by Juhan Kuus. (*GroundUp*).

The above example gives further credence to the notion that under the apartheid regime, propagandistic imagery was a highly favoured mechanism of the period's repressive system (Thomas 2020:3). This is precisely why resistance photography was viewed with not only contempt by the NP, but genuine fear as photography that took on this form contained an inherently powerful testimony of apartheid's true nature, not watered down and sanitised by the state's propagandist machinery (Enzwezor & Bester 2013:2). Moreover, in her book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag (2003:10) posits that underlying power dynamics play a key role in the interpretation of an image. In other words, by virtue of Figure 5 depicting a protesting Black civilian being aggressively taken into custody by a white state police officer part of a regime designed to oppress the Black masses, the viewer's sense of empathy, shock, and disdain will most likely be amplified.

Even with the endless repressive consequences of the apartheid government constantly hovering over their heads, resistance photographers still understood the gravity of what their works could potentially accomplish. Through the compelling documentation of the visual history of the struggle period, the fight against apartheid saw these photographers become a key component in ensuring the atrocities exacted by the unjust government would no longer exist in the shadows, therefore prompting some form of international censure (Thomas 2020:14). The objective was that this could ultimately lead to actionable change in the racially divided country. However, in order for this reality to come into fruition, there would need to be ardent proponents of this cause. Many images exhibiting the harsh struggles of the Black

population became more prominent as apartheid laws became more repressive due to growing dissent. These photographs were captured by photographers who would come to be renowned activists during the struggle such as Peter Magubane, Ernest Cole, and the Afrapix collective to name a few.

2.3 The Afrapix Collective

Established in 1982 by Omar Badsha and Paul Weinberg, the Afrapix collective was a group of Black and white photographers who were dedicated to painting an unfiltered and nuanced picture of the repressed existence the Black population were forced to live under in apartheid South Africa (Krantz 2008:295). One of the key principles Afrapix espoused was that the photography they were capturing and distributing could not be divorced from the excessively unjust political status quo they were observing. Furthermore, their purpose was also to offset the imbalance produced by the propaganda-filled mass media that dominated the narrative around the intentions behind apartheid (Krantz 2008:293). A mission statement such as this one perfectly underpins the approach taken up by numerous resistance photographers of that period.

In the wake of increasingly repressive violence, those belonging to the Afrapix collective provided crucial evidence of what famed photographer David Goldblatt dubbed "The Structure of Things Then" (Thomas 2020:3). From the early days of its inception, the Afrapix collective set out effectively to communicate the 'urgency of the moment' as most forms of mainstream media had dismally failed in this regard (Krantz 2008:296). Because of this dedication to documenting the unadulterated truth of apartheid and the atrocities it ratified, Afrapix consequently produced photography that would go on to form part of South Africa's compelling visual history (Thomas 2012:207). In essence, their images were captured and disseminated with the resolute intention of removing the distorted veil that enchanted the global community into believing the apartheid regime was still sustainable in any way.

Another key factor that grounded Afrapix's documentary photography movement was the fact that they maintained constructive ties with grassroot organisations who strongly resisted apartheid such as the United Democratic Front, trade unions, and various church groups based in the townships (Thomas 2020:15). The mobilisation of anti-apartheid movements was further bolstered by the effective methods of dissemination Afrapix had at its disposal and utilised. Internationally, photographs documenting the struggle of Black people were plastered all over pamphlets, books, and posters, and then subsequently circulated by the International Defence

and Aid Fund in the UK, with a New York photo agency called Impact Visuals committing to the same undertaking. This process would often be achieved through the risky act of smuggling film out the country. Recognising that the widespread sharing of these images could contribute to the destabilisation of the status quo, during the state of emergency the apartheid security forces raided all and any operations tied to the Afrapix collective. Sporadic raids such as these were not uncommon for the members of Afrapix and often involved the seizure of any 'incriminating evidence'. However, in 1988 the abhorrent tactics of the apartheid government saw a drastic escalation when they bombed the headquarters that housed both them and the South African Council of Churches (Thomas 2020:16).

Moreover, the role of the many women who formed part of the Afrapix collective cannot be understated. During the 1980's, nine female photographers were at the centre of progressing Afrapix's mission of exposing the hidden horrors of apartheid: Lesley Lawson, Biddy Partridge, Deseni Moodliar (Sooben), Zubeida Vallie, Gille de Vlieg, Anna Zieminski, Ellen Elmendorp, Wendy Schwegmann, and Giséle Wulfsohn (Thomas 2020:19). The images captured by these women were often included in international anti-apartheid publications, further helping to demystify the apartheid government's spin on the oppressive regime (Newbury, Rizzo & Thomas 2020:15). The presence of female and racially diverse voices during this era of resistance photography was also pivotal because it allowed for more nuanced storytelling through the visual. As Newbury, Rizzo and Thomas (2020:15) explain, the recruitment of Black female photographers like Mavis Mthandeki and Primrose Talakumeni ensured that Black women bearing the brunt of apartheid's hardships, could also play an active role in outing its after-effects.

Although Afrapix was doing commendable work in the space of resistance photography, it still had to grapple with a few of its own internal shortcomings as it related to those within the collective. The group essentially functioned as a microcosm when it came to the differing societal blockades photographers encountered based on their race, class and gender, creating some sense of 'outsider-ness' for everyone. A prime example of this is how Black photographer Santu Mofokeng often found himself arriving at a disturbing scene long after his white counterparts as they could often afford cars and motorbikes. His economic stringencies also extended to the quality of work he could produce as he was constantly forced to use chemicals of a lower grade to process his photographic prints (Hayes 2009:5). Therefore, due to their race, which directly influenced their social and class status, Black photographers were experienced disadvantages that their white counterparts did not. The intersection of these

inequities is best explained by using Kimberlé Crenshaw's basement analogy. Crenshaw (1989:151) describes the inequities of social hierarchies and how they, if left unchecked, can be perpetually discriminatory against those not in protected classes based on their race, class, gender, physical ability, age or sexuality. She further explains that individuals who are multiply-disadvantaged (for example, Black female photographers during this period) are closer to the ground of the basement, while propping up others with singular disadvantages (for example white female photographers) who are closer to the ceiling of the basement, making their social mobility that much easier.

Conversely, the 'outsider-ness' of white photographers stemmed from them not being accustomed to documenting and getting access to Black township life, which was a far-cry from the surroundings of suburban South Africa in the 1980s (Hayes 2009:7). Ultimately, it is this 'outsider-ness' that potentially served as additional motivating fuel behind highlighting the injustices and racial inequalities that gripped apartheid South Africa.

2.4 The works of prominent resistance photographers

The pain and repression experienced by the Black population is a common trope that appears in photography capturing the effects of apartheid. As depicted in Figure 6, a Black man is being ordered to produce his passbook by apartheid law enforcement, a legislated practise that Black South Africans were continuously subjected to. A passbook, or a '*dompas*' (dumb pass) as it was widely referred to as, was a form of identification mandated by the apartheid state that restricted and monitored the movement of the Black populace, further entrenching all the separatist laws of the land (Thomas 2020:6). Images such as these documented the everyday freedoms Black people were not privy to, like peacefully walking the streets without being harassed by police officials purely based on the colour of one's skin. Furthermore, images displaying this dehumanising practise demonstrate how oppressive systems such as that of the apartheid state were keenly interested in infiltrating every facet of Black citizen's lives, consequently leading to a significant portion of the population never realising the prospect of uninterrupted agency over their lives (Mbembe 2003:13). Legislation around the carrying of passbooks soon spawned a myriad of non-violent, mass-scale, and well-organised resistance movements around the country which would later be termed the "Defiance Campaign" (Thomas 2020:7). One such protest action documented through resistance photography was the burning of passbooks in large groups as a sign of defiance by those frustrated with the

repressive laws that halted any attempt Black people made to attain some semblance of self-determination (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Man being stopped and asked to produce his passbook, Johannesburg, 1966. Photograph by Ernest Cole. (*Art Blart*).

Figure 7: A group of Black South Africans burning their dompas books as form of defiance, Soweto, 1960. Photograph by Terrance Spencer. (*Getty Images*).

A major component of being an effective struggle photographer included unveiling the plight of Black South Africans, as well as the resilience of their human spirit in the face of cruel injustices directed at them in a racially segregated society. Subsequently, the other more

visceral aspect of this genre involved highlighting the sheer depths of the country's viciousness in its methods of subjugating Black people. The level of violence enacted on those in conflict with the oppressive tactics and ideologies of the system was indefensible to its core (Thomas 2012:212). One of the most iconic images that places the regime's merciless excesses on full display, is that of young Hector Pieterson's lifeless body being carried by a fellow student in the wake of the 1976 Soweto Uprisings (Figure 8). Photographed by Sam Nzima, Pieterson's execution demonstrated that South Africa's state-sanctioned police violence did not care about distinguishing between adult voices of dissent, and opposition coming from children seeking a future free of subjugation. It is also key to point out that Hector Pieterson was in no way the only Black child to suffer death at the hands of the state police in this particularly volatile era of apartheid. However, the image of his sister, Antoinette Sithole, frantically running alongside Mbuyisa Makhubu in a desperate attempt to save his life laid bare the extent of the societal traumas innocent Black citizens were forced to endure. Moreover, the horrifying scenes that played out on that fateful day could be said to have been foreshadowed in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. In the chapter titled, "On Violence", Fanon (1963:3) explains that the subsequent momentum initiated by those seeking to end violently invasive decolonisation is effectively an unstoppable and inevitable force. As such, the disgruntled masses begin to view themselves as active proponents of their futures, and not simply powerless spectators who feel obligated to bow to the whims of the oppressor. His writings go on to predict the inescapability of ensuing violence and bloodshed at the hands of the colonial antagonist following their resistance, something that the events of 1976 proved. The undiluted gravitas of this tragic photograph assisted in fuelling the growing calls made by several nations around the world to end the sadistic and unsustainable regime that was apartheid (Krantz 2008:292).

Figure 8: Hector Pieterson being carried away from a fatal conflict with the police, Soweto, 1976. Photograph by Sam Nzima. (*SA History*).

Certain photographers, like Peter Magubane for instance, had a keen eye for capturing the devastating aftereffects of the excessive police violence Black civilians had to contend with. One such heart-wrenching event was the Sharpeville massacre which took place on May in 1960. With the police indiscriminately firing 13000 bullets into a crowd of over 7000 unarmed protestors, the result became what is now acknowledged as one of the most gruesome transgressions of human rights in apartheid history where 69 people were killed (Thomas 2020:10).

Figure 9: The funeral that took place in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre, Johannesburg, 1960. Photograph by Peter Magubane. (*Javett-UP*).

In the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre, Peter Magubane, as well as Ian Berry, were among the very few photojournalists who visually recorded the atrocities committed on that day. In addition to this, Magubane also made it a point to adequately portray the anguish caused by the incident and the effect it had on the Black community. His photograph titled "Sharpeville Funeral" (Figure 9) depicts a solemn ceremony attended by more than 5000 people, mourning the 69 lost souls seen in the image of their coffins (Thomas 2020:11). An assertion made by Enwezor and Bester (2013:10) is that this horrific moment, and the manner in which the images it consequently produced reverberated across the globe, was the catalyst for numerous anti-apartheid campaigns rapidly sprouting both internationally and locally. This quintessential example of resistance photography would go on to be one of the fuelling forces behind the galvanising of human rights activists the world over, who were then able to magnify the voices of the marginalised population of South Africa. In brief, images such as these, and the global response to them signalled a crucial shift when it came to how the international community was conscientised and concerned about injustices occurring in other countries where mass social discontent was on the rise (Ritchin 1998: 605).

To critically discuss the dominant tropes and symbolism present in the resistance photography of the apartheid era, the photographic works of Santu Mofokeng would be an apt point of origin.

This is not necessarily because his images best encapsulate the recurring visual themes of that period, it is actually quite the opposite. Mofokeng, a key figure within struggle photography, joined the Afrapix group in 1985 where he was offered the opportunity to pursue his aspirations of being a photographer (Saayman-Hattingh 2011:197). With a camera in hand, he was equipped to document the harsh state-commissioned callousness of everyday life in South African townships. And this element of "everyday life" is what came to set Mofokeng apart from his contemporaries and the often excessively wicked realities of Black people reflected in their struggle photography.

Figure 10: A group of apartheid police standing with sjamboks in hand, Johannesburg, 1986. Photograph by Santu Mofokeng. (*The New Yorker*).

The scene pictured in Figure 10 was not an uncommon one in the later stages of apartheid South Africa, especially with the whole country on a knife's edge after a state of emergency was declared in 1985. Where the accepted prescripts of resistance photography would ordinarily dictate that a photographer on the ground capture all the brutalities and aftereffects of a violent police encounter, the above image opts not to do so. Mofokeng, was particularly averse to the idea of documenting the inhumane nature of apartheid police bloodshed (Hayes 2009:40). Mofokeng would go on to clarify that his apprehension was largely attributed to his disdain for the growing appetite internationally for gruesome photographs highlighting the harrowing plight of the oppressed, and the ethically questionable economics surrounding this

imagery. After leaving Afrapix in the late 1980s, Mofokeng (1999: 269) expressed his mild disgruntlement with what he labelled "propaganda images" that were being overly circulated locally and internationally, and how these visuals told an incomplete story of the country's marginalised people. Therefore, it can be asserted that a sense of temporality is being exercised in Figure 10, as the impending confrontation is suspended in time to offer the viewer an alternative lens to witness the Black experience during this particular moment of apartheid (Hayes 2009:39). It is antithetical depictions like those of Santu Mafokeng that underline what other vital facets of the racial equality struggle resistance photography had the potential to expose.

2.5 Alternative tropes and depictions of Black women during apartheid

As observed in some of the photographs referenced throughout the previous section, resistance photography often depicted its Black subjects in a state of despair to highlight the atrocities of the apartheid regime. For example, the image of Antoinette Sithole frantically running alongside the lifeless body of her younger brother, Hector Pieterson, aligns with these ubiquitous representations of trauma. In reality, numerous photographs of Black women taken during and after moments of brutal police violence were captured by photographers like Peter Magubane and Sam Nzima (Thomas 2020:12). However, there was also an emphasis placed on portraying the humanity and bravery of these women during this period.

Figure 11: "Train Church", Johannesburg, 1986. Photograph by Santu Mofokeng. (*The New Yorker*).

In relation to the picture titled "Train Church" (Figure 11), Oluremi Onabanjo (2020) is quoted as saying, "These images, by the South African photographer Santu Mofokeng, ostensibly depict scenes of segregated transport during apartheid. Yet in their composition they evoke something more: the rhythms and textures of everyday life." This poignant description of Mofokeng's works undoubtedly speaks to one of the main tropes it aspired to and what it was attempting to curtail; effectively, an asymmetrical narrative concerning the daily lives of those being unjustly persecuted by the apartheid system. Mofokeng's narrative is not purely defined by the vicious whipping of sjamboks, police dogs being set on Black protestors, or clouds of gunpowder in the air after an unpardonable massacre. The above image can also be seen to be alluding to the uncertainty and fears of Black South African women attending the prayer services that would take place on these trains. Mofokeng even laments that for a long time (specifically in the late 1980s) photography presenting everyday life in townships, including pastimes such as street soccer, drinking in the local shebeens, and ordinary life as a whole, was deemed to be unpublishable as they did not align with the exceedingly violent, but commercially viable images the world had become accustomed to (Saayman-Hattingh 2011:199). Similarly, in an interview photographer Motlhalefi Mahlabe (2004) espoused the same sentiments regarding the sometimes one-note approach to documenting the lived experience of subjugated groups in South Africa during the late and highly tumultuous stages of apartheid. Mahlabe noted that those exposed to the prevalent documentary photography in mainstream media would, in all likelihood, never think that those living in the racially segregated areas such as townships still went to church, or participated in cultural activities, or engaged in anything remotely creative as a means of coping in the face of daily repression.

In the same way that Mofokeng denounced the lack of nuance exercised by some of his struggle photography contemporaries, these one-note depictions could easily characterise the portrayal of Black women during the same period. The repressive system Black citizens suffered under warranted the need for photographers to lay bare the discriminatory inequities that became entrenched in apartheid South Africa. However, the manner in which that narrative is ultimately woven carries its own set of pitfalls. For instance, in her analysis of an interview profiling South African photographer Jenny Gordon, Thomas (2012:217) asserts that photographs documenting the experiences of Black women during the later and most violent stages of apartheid tend to accentuate whatever sorrowful state they may be in. It should be pointed out, though, that these types of portrayals are not inherently negative. After all, very similarly to their male counterparts, Black women did bear the brunt of a brutal state, often at the hands of

police who would not hesitate to enact violence on unarmed civilians or protestors (Thomas 2020:12). However, because the composition of images exhibiting the plight of women largely framed them as being in a constant state of trauma, this reinforced the misleading trope of Black women only having the capacity to be mourners or weeping, inactive agents of their circumstances.

Contrast this with the image presented in Figure 12. The illustration was first printed in *Voice of Women*, a pivotal publication of the ANC Women's Section which sought to entrench a more inclusive culture within the liberation movement (Miller 2009:69). In the image, we see a mother wielding what appears to be a rifle while her child is resting on her back. This iconography of the militarised mother can be considered to be a symbol of empowerment for a number of reasons. Firstly, motherhood here is not purely represented as a responsibility where women exclusively focus on their children without also speaking about and fighting for larger socio-political concerns that will, most likely, affect their own progeny in the future. Moreover, there is something to be said about placing strong emphasis on the life-giving quality of a woman while depicting her bearing arms that have the ability to end it, presumably with the intention of ensuring long-term social change for her infant (Miller 2009:68). Pretorius and Sauthoff (2004:25) also propose that employing visual techniques constructed from familiar and resonant ideological viewpoints can have a persuasive effect on a particular audience. In this instance, the line drawing of a Black women bearing arms in the fight against apartheid while her child rests on her back is one that defies the ideologies of racism and patriarchy. Thus, it can be contended that conventional portrayals of Black women exclusively being passive and powerless under the oppressive heel of apartheid were sometimes subverted in images produced during this period.

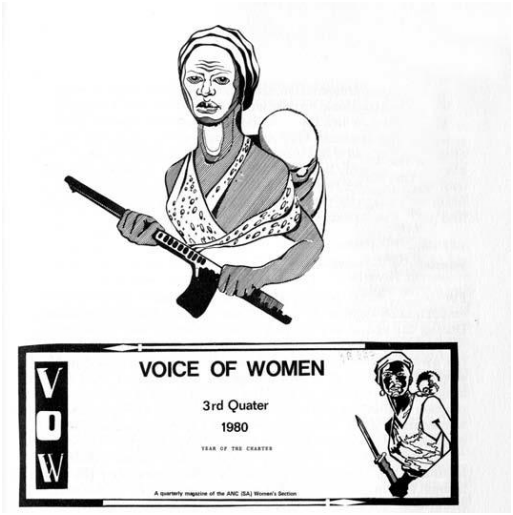

Figure 12: Cover image from the Voice of Women publication, Johannesburg. 1980. Illustrator unknown. (*African Arts*).

Figure 13: Woman standing in front of apartheid state police, Johannesburg, 1980. Photograph by Paul Weinberg. (*Times Live*).

Figure 13 is a perfect portrayal of how Black women were sometimes shown in a more courageous light. Specifically, this woman is observed brazenly clenching both of her fists in front of a police officer on top of what appears to be military-grade state police vehicles. These vehicles, referred to as Buffels, were often used to execute brutal crowd control exercises in Black townships, and now evoke triggering memories for those who understand their historical significance (Farbstein 2020:469). However, despite their intimidating presence, the woman pictured in the image refuses to be dwarfed by the Buffel's bulky dimensions. All the signs point to this being a clear display of defiance in the face of an oppressive state. It could

therefore be argued that these depictions of resistance acted as reminders that the somewhat monolithic narrative of domination was not the exclusive reality of the apartheid regime. This further cements the notion that resistance photography was not only concerned with documenting the harrowing traumas many women encountered, but also their heroic nature in the face of these hardships (Hayes 2009:146).

2.6 Wathint'umfazi, wathint'imbokodo: women in protest during apartheid

"Nothing will defeat these women, these wives, these mothers." (Altman 1956:7)

In 1956 over 20 000 women, led by the Federation of South African Women[3], marched and protested at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, where women of all races were standing in solidarity against the pass laws enforced on Black women (Thomas 2020:9). This level of mass mobilisation ultimately set a new and much needed precedent during the era of the Defiance Campaign[4] for a myriad of reasons. Firstly, this protest action (led by, amongst others, Lilian Ngoyi and Helen Joseph pictured alongside Rahima Moosa and Sophia Williams[5]) demonstrated to the apartheid government, and the country as a whole, the level of sophistication that could be achieved through a racially diverse and nation-building centred political movement (Lenser 2019:51). This was a feat that had not even been achieved by their male counterpoints at the time. In her autobiography, Helen Joseph (1986:1) herself even drew attention to the novel aesthetic created as a consequence of their large-scale gathering. She specifically highlighted how there was a colourful mosaic of culture and representation as she would witness the beauty of African headscarves in one instance, while also being in the presence of someone being brightly adorned in an Indian sari, similar to the one worn by ally Rahima Moosa. Another reason behind the significance of the Women's March of 1956 was that it created a discourse around feminist activism in the country on an unprecedented scale. The narrative around the invisibility and exclusion of women with regard to fruitful political protest witnessed a notable shift, as their inclusion in any national discourses in the public domain was previously on a miniscule to non-existent level (Ntwape 2016:50).

[3] The Federation of South African Women was a broad-based women's organization established in 1954 to ensure equality for all women in South African society.
[4] This was a nonviolent, large scale resistance campaign that was largely led by the African National Congress between 1950-1953.
[5] These four women were members of FEDSAW as well as fervent advocates for women's rights throughout the struggle against apartheid. This activism included their pivotal roles in mobilising the over 20 000 women present during the march on 9 August 1956 (SA History 2020).

Figure 14: A large group of women protest Pass Laws at the Union Buildings, Pretoria, 1956. Photograph by Peter Magubane. (*SA History*).

Peter Magubane was present to document the monumental events at the Union Buildings alongside fellow Drum Magazine photographer Jurgen Schadeberg. Magubane, in particular, indicated how the developments following the Women's March as well as other resistance movements linked to the Defiance Campaign signalled a shift in the Security Police's vigour when it came to suppressing the unrestricted production and dissemination of resistance photography. Between the period of 1956 to approximately 1961, law enforcement's attitude towards photographers and journalists became increasingly hostile (Thomas 2020:10). This was to such an extent that Schadeberg and Magubane would famously use inventive and clandestine tactics to ensure that they could continue capturing the injustices and brutality carried out by the Security Police. On occasion, this could involve using empty milk cartons, and in extreme cases, even a hollowed-out loaf of bread, to hide their cameras so as not be caught by police officers on the scene (Thomas 2020:10). It can, therefore, be confidently asserted that the depiction of the Women's March to the Union Building marked a pivotal turning point in the fight for racial equality in the country, lending itself to other political causes that would succeed it, but particularly those related to the plight of women. What is more, the images documenting the Women's March notably manage to evade the common trope of violence that traditionally characterised protest imagery during the apartheid era.

The use of the isiZulu saying, "Wathint'mfazi, wathint'imbokodo, uzakufa" saw a significant spike in popularity among women during the apartheid years. Translated it means, "You strike a woman, you strike a rock, you will die". Regarding the gravity of this saying, Nzimande (2008:223) alludes to the symbolism contained in the word *imbokodo*. She explains that *imbokodo*, or a grinding stone, represents the strong, dependable nature of a woman's spirit,

and how even in the face of adversity, it will ultimately remain intact and unscathed. During the Women's March of 1956, this saying became somewhat of a freedom chant for the women in attendance and echoed all throughout the Union Buildings (Figure 14). The chant came to symbolise the manner in which women had to harden themselves so the apartheid systems could not crush them (Ramantswana 2019:2). Women of colour found themselves being maligned and stripped of what little agency they wielded at the hands of an oppressive state that had already disenfranchised their families by making their husbands and sons political prisoners or enemies of the state. Therefore, this display of unyielding solidarity and unity by women on that day, and their battle cry of "wathint'umfazi, wathint'imbokodo" could also be seen to symbolise an optimistic prophesy that envisioned the eventual downfall of all apartheid structures (Ramantswana 2019:2).

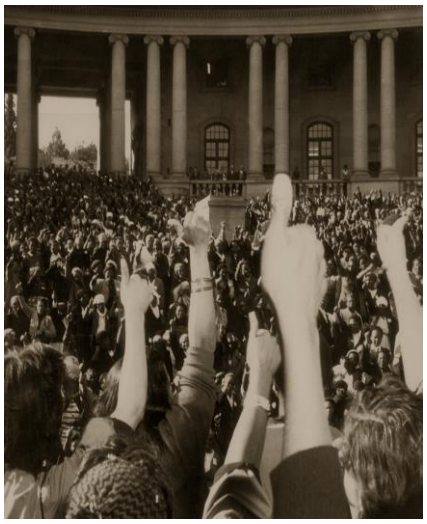

Figure 15: Thousands of South African women with their thumbs up signalling the "Afrika" salute, Pretoria. 1956. Photograph by Jacqui Masiza. (*Apartheid Museum*).

McGarry *et al* (2019:19) make the assertion that marginalised political voices are not solely concerned about being validated as a part of the political order. Rather, they seek to destabilise and rupture the current state of affairs, whether that be structures associated with politics, culture or the economy. These political voices can be bolstered through an efficient expression of solidarity that demonstrates a collective struggle caused by what the maligned participants believe to be a politically illegitimate system. In the case of the 1956 march, scores of women challenged the legitimacy of unjust apartheid laws of apartheid government, and they contemptuously viewed Prime Minister J. G. Strijdom as its proxy. Therefore, after they were refused an audience with the then head of state, five representatives briefed the crowd

assembled in the Union Buildings amphitheatre about this development (Sisulu 2006:73). What followed was yet another display of steadfast solidarity pictured in Figure 15.

> We stood on the little rostrum, looking down on the women again, and Lilian Ngoyi called on them to stand in silent protest for thirty minutes. As she raised her right arm in the Congress salute, 20,000 arms went up and stayed up for those endless minutes. We knew that all over South Africa, women in other cities and towns were gathered in protest. We were not just 20,000 women, but many thousands more (Joseph 1986:2).

The above quote was uttered by Helen Joseph as she recounted exactly how their silent protest had come to be. In her account, she also makes mention of the women in attendance not only sustaining the moment of silence for a period of thirty minutes, but furthermore, that their thumbs were lifted to the sky in unison. This thumbs up gesture should not be taken for granted as history has repeatedly proven that even the most innocuous symbols have the ability to generate some level of symbolic resonance (McGarry *et al* 2019:19). Accordingly, during the period of the Women's March to the Union Buildings, the thumbs salute (which was sometimes also referred to as the "Afrika" salute) initially represented a political affiliation to the struggle against the oppressive regime in South Africa, and the continent as a whole (Minkley 1990:6). The use of the gesture became less prevalent after the 1950s but could potentially be viewed as a precursor to the clenched fist which was emblematic of the Black Power movement that was popularised in the United States of America (USA); tenets of which were espoused in South Africa's own liberation struggle and even post-apartheid movements. Nevertheless, the Afrika salute and its symbolic power cannot be called into question as it possessed a kind of invisible force that now forms part of the central narrative intertwined with the Women's March of 1956 (Liao 2010:37).

Figure 16: Poster depicting the pivotal role of women during apartheid, Chicago. 1981. Artwork by the Medu Art Ensemble. (*Art Institute of Chicago*).

Figure 17: Poster depicting the pivotal role of women during apartheid, Chicago. 1981. Artwork by the Medu Art Ensemble. (*Art Institute of Chicago*).

As a means of commemorating the valiant efforts of the women who were present in 1956, the Medu Art Ensemble[6] presented an exhibition of posters highlighting their contributions. In

[6] The Medu Art Ensemble was a collective of exiled South African artists who sought to confront the apartheid government through art. The group, whose numbers varied between 15-50 members, was established in Botswana in the early 1980s (Sithole 2017:32).

offering a comprehensive visual analysis of the 1956 march, these art pieces expand the language one can use to unpack the significant events of that day. This is not only because they would later be interpreted as a watershed moment in the country's history. They were also the foundation on which many other women-led movements would ultimately build their own exploits as it relates to the advancement of women.

In Figure 16 we observe an image of women with what could be read as a stoic yet determined appearance. This woman is pictured fiercely brandishing a well-established symbol in the form of a clenched fist, while holding pieces of a manacle that is visibly broken. Imagery of broken chains instantaneously evokes the symbolism of slavery and the inhumane measures of control exerted by the 'master'. The use of chains was a method of control that, during the period of the American slave trade, evolved far beyond the simple bounds of physical enslavement, but also fashioned an equally constricting psychological kind of imprisonment (Bradley 2015:163). The frank depiction in this instance illustrates how a spirit of defiance and undeterred leadership was undoubtedly present in the women of 1956, especially when juxtaposed with the later portrayals of women in struggle photography (Byrd & Mings 2020:1). Tropes of collective unity and resistance are both elements that can be derived from this image, and they adequately encompass the attributes that broke the chains of silence and submissiveness that countless women were bound by at the time.

Silk-screening is a technique the Medu Art Ensemble often employed when creating their art. In fact, they vigorously championed the silk screen printing as it was an inexpensive process that required minimal equipment and could be easily taught to the masses. Their view was that once oppressed communities were skilled in this regard, they could then widely produce and distribute posters depicting the socio-economic and political struggles caused by apartheid (Sithole 2017:33).

The Medu Art Ensemble also produced a collage-like poster made up of diverse images with text reading, "women resist" serving as a fitting backdrop (Figure 17). The significance of this poster and its artistic methodology lies in the fact that it is attempting to capture how diverse and wide-ranging the list of influential women who fought for the country's liberation is (Byrd & Mings 2020:1). Their faces are often anonymous or forgotten by society, therefore, this tribute artistically attempts to remedy the obliviousness of the nation's struggles in this regard. The unprecedented scope of civic organising is also an element that is reflected in this photomontage.

The female depictions during the pivotal Women's March of 1956 have demonstrated the tenacious spirit of countless movements led by Black women during apartheid. It can also be noted that many of these early feminist movements were somewhat rooted in the first and second waves of feminism. While first-wave feminism sought to enshrine political equality for women through the right to vote, second-wave feminism built on this fight for women's agency by critiquing systemic social inequalities in the form of marriage, domestic labour, gender pay gaps, and sexist beauty standards (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2005:10). Therefore, in the same way that second-wave feminist collective protests were occurring in different parts of the world around the same period and advancing the causes of women, South African women and feminist organisations were also at the forefront of calling out apartheid's injustices that infringed on women's rights[7].

In the 1950s, the female-led Black Sash[8] (originally known as Women's League for the Defence of the Constitution) initially became an influential political organisation concerned with mobilising white women in South African society, who at the time were essentially apolitical and tended to vote in same manner their husbands did (Spink 1991:29). The Black Sash would, however, later align itself with other multiracial organisations and causes affecting the country's Black female population[9].

As the above example illustrates, Black women were often suppressed from engaging in the political sphere, sometimes even by other women. Jennifer Nash (2008:3) makes the assertion that the doctrines that inform both intersectionality and Black feminism are aimed at redressing the disconnect stemming from the notion that conventional feminism is for women from all backgrounds and walks of life. This is further exemplified by the social and political undertakings of Black organisations and movements that were being mobilised between the 1950s-1970s. For instance, women in the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) were also spearheading social change during apartheid, while having to contend with its patriarchal head – the African National Congress (ANC). The ANCWL would go on

[7] Adami & Plesch (2022) offer valuable insights into the fight for women's international human rights that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, and how the UN offered a platform to marginalised female voices across the globe.
[8] The Black Sash was originally founded by Ruth Foley, Jean Sinclair, Jean Bosazza, Helen Newton Thompson, Tercia Pybus and Elizabeth Maclaren.
[9] It has been explained by some of the founding members that the apprehension of the organisation to advocate for multiracial issues was mostly rooted in practicality as they believed it was a lost cause at the time. However, they were still called out for their hypocrisy by other more diverse political organisations (Spink 1991:36).

to become a key organising wing of the ANC when it came to mobilising women in the country, including the 1952's Defiance Campaign, as well as the mass protest action of 1956-57 (Hurley 2003:3). In a similar vein, the 1970s saw Black women working in the clothing, food processing and textile industries being subjected to untenable and unfair workplace conditions that often left them more vulnerable than their male counterparts. Black female workers' wages were so low that they were unable to contribute to the Unemployment Insurance Fund, meaning if they were dismissed, they were not guaranteed any income (Tshoaedi 2012:5). In response to this, Emma Mashinini[10] (1989:19) states that decrying these workplace inequities through protest was a constant battle for her and other Black women. It is, therefore, evident that these and many other movements throughout the period of apartheid were major proponents of Black feminism and intersectional issues as they compensated for a pronounced gap present in the fight for Black women's rights.

2.7 Conclusion

The establishment of resistance photography in the context of apartheid illustrated the often heart-wrenching aspects of the then government's brutal tactics in subjugating the Black populace. However, in the same breath, the photographers at the forefront of this illuminating genre also had the opportunity to document the inherent strength of the human spirit. The visceral nature of these images had the ability not only to inform the rest of the world of the atrocities happening in the racially divided state, but also to galvanise mounting voices of dissent to act against the injustices being perpetuated.

In particular though, images captured by those affiliated with the Afrapix collective were able to broadcast narratives that were not solely related to trauma and oppression. For example, the works of Peter Magubane and Santu Mofokeng depicted the humanity of women, sometimes highlighting their heroic nature when confronted with the repressiveness of apartheid. This is even more evident in the tropes found in the photographs captured at the 1956 Women's March that depict a strong sense of solidarity and defiance.

As a final point, images capturing the respective fights waged by both oppressed men and women would subsequently go on to be reflected in the myriad of social movements being intensely promulgated by future generations in post-apartheid South Africa, further demonstrating the substantive importance of resistance photography and its tenets. With

[10] Emma Mashinini was a formidable trade unionist during the 1970s, and founded the South African Commercial, Catering, and Allied Workers

specific reference to the women of this new South Africa though, the female representations in the above discussion also serve as a foundation for discussing the many intersectional quandaries that still presently persist.

CHAPTER THREE:

WOMEN IN PROTEST NOW: A VISUAL ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS

3.1 Introduction

To say that feminist activism in South Africa saw a significant resurgence in the mid-2010s would be somewhat of a mild understatement. The #RhodesMustFall (RMF) and #FeesMustFall (FMF) movements would go on to dominate the narrative within the sphere of higher education, something that the likes of Blade Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education, had probably not foreseen. Another troubling element that surfaced during the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall period was the starkly apparent lack of progressiveness when it came to gender relations on university campuses where a new generation of students were expected to take up the mantle of gender equality but failed to do so (Sikweyiya & Nkosi 2017:3). The naivety of this pipe dream would gradually unravel as the student protests ensued. Issues addressing the plight of female, transgender and nonbinary students were voiced through offshoot protest movements within the greater conversation around general grievances aired by the greater student body. However, these protests that served to counter the heteronormative agenda of the patriarchal leadership often associated with protest action in the country, increasingly began to occupy the spotlight as South African institutions of higher learning were being confronted with their numerous shortcomings in this regard. Youth-led movements that began in 2015, particularly on various campuses around the country, were initially triggered by the often-forgotten project of decoloniality and economic equality that the Black student populace felt was being illegitimately snubbed by those in university upper-management. This would ultimately be the foundation on which the discourse around intersectional issues affecting women and those from the LGBTQIA+[11] community would be established.

With this powder keg of student concerns serving as the backdrop for the mass-scale and pointed displays of discontent by youth attending South Africa's assortment of universities, there was another unexpected force at play; that of social media and the sprawling online communities it conceived. The discussion around the effective and pervasive nature of digital

[11] Although this community is referred to in the singular, it should be noted that LGBTQIA+ South Africans are in no way monolithic. In other words, the intersectionality of race, gender and class all contribute to their "diverse and complex" everyday experiences (McLean 2018:13).

activism and the accelerated dissemination of protest-related imagery on social networks such as Twitter and Facebook also became more prevalent during this upsurge in student movements. South Africa, and the continent as a whole, was acclimating to a new digitally fuelled status quo where its youth now had the power and agency to expedite the processes of political and social change through online activism. Marginalised voices, in this case disgruntled university students, could now subvert the inaccessible structures of mainstream media and not only mobilise nationally with the aid of hashtags, but also be the prime conduits of their own narrative (Mutsvairo 2016:10). Not unlike the student uprising of 1976 in Soweto, the FMF and RMF movements that occurred across the country essentially underpinned a deep-seated crisis across a multitude of societal terrains that the government had repeatedly failed to proactively tackle (Badat 2016:2).

The following chapter will delve into the emergence of student activism on online platforms as well as their inner workings, especially in relation to the distribution of protest images in traditional media and on popular social media networks, namely Twitter and Facebook. Chapter 3 will also critically analyse visual material documenting the various feminist and LGBTQIA+ protest campaigns that were instigated amid RMF and FMF, and how they can be viewed as disruptive. Therefore, this chapter essentially turns the spotlight to the feminist student activism advancing intersectional issues in South Africa as from the mid-2010s.

3.2 The rise of digital activism and online communities (2015-2016)

Over the span of approximately ten years, statistics surrounding the scope of internet usage and access have indicated a steady upward trend amongst a population of almost 60 million South Africans. By 2011, the national census already reported that 89 percent of households owned a mobile phone of some kind and as of 2020, 34.93 million of those in possession of a phone had access to mobile internet (Bosch & Roberts 2021:133). Due to mobile handsets becoming more accessible for the population, and particularly the youth, social networking sites/application (SNS/A) have observed a considerable spike in popularity. As of 2017, Facebook was the most widely utilised SNS/A with an estimated user base of 13 million. Facebook's nearest competitors in the social media ecology were YouTube with 8 million users, Twitter with 7.7 million users on its platform, and Instagram with roughly 3.5 million users (Gwaze *et al* 2018:4). The social media platforms Twitter and Facebook are crucial in the context of FMF and RMF as these were the online domains where the majority of images related to the student protests were most effectively disseminated. Consequently, through some

of the social networks listed above, the country's rise in digital citizenship among young people has produced a piercing weapon for students to facilitate movements combating the slew of societal issues they are saddled with.

With the advent of social movements being heavily mobilised through the use of online platforms, what can be termed as 'hashtag activism' has sprung up in a staggering manner[12]. A hashtag allows for users to track and engage dialogue as well as visual content related to a particular social media campaign, and an ingenious consequence of this digital mechanism is that it can often lead to spurts of viral moments that grip the public sentiment (Gwaze *et al* 2018:5). A well-strategised hashtag campaign can be the difference between an online movement spreading awareness about an important cause on a mass scale and getting lost in the noise of other compelling stories dominating the news cycle[13]. In the case of the #FeesMustFall online campaign and the subsequent protest action that followed, countless students were afforded a platform to air their grievances with respect to the untenable and untransformed status quo numerous universities had adopted; the #FMF itself was able to generate almost 1.3 million tweets in the last two weeks of October 2015 (Bosch & Roberts 2021:134). Accordingly, this paired with the theory that asserts politically charged visuals are more likely to affect one's consciousness in contrast to information that is purely text-driven, further reinforces the heftiness engrained in the previous statistic (Casas & Williams 2019:360).

FMF and RMF protestors were able to harness the influence of social media in a manner that would not be as effective with traditional media reporting. This is exemplified in the resonance of powerful and unifying moments captured on video and then disseminated on social networking sites through newly created communities. Circulated video recordings of female and queer student activists singing songs like "*Senzeni na*?" illustrate a collective expression of pain by the female student body (Dlakavu 2016:103). The origins of this song are strongly rooted in the fight against the brutality of apartheid and were predominantly sung by those most afflicted by its unjust policies. Translated from isiZulu, these lyrics simply ask, "What have we done?"; and to a broader extent, "What have we done to deserve this kind of treatment?" In the

[12] Tebogo Sebeelo (2020) & Trust Matsilela *et al* (2021) give further insight into the scope of political change that can occur after effective hashtag activism has been enacted, particularly in the African context.
[13] There are countless examples documenting the convergence of online and offline feminist campaigns that have dominated international news cycles. For instance the #NiUnaMenos (Not One Less) in Argentina protesting violence against women, or the viral social media campaign around the sexual assault case of a female student in Steubenville, Ohio (Flores *et al* 2018).

context of women singing it on campuses, the original song was repurposed to also include the lyrics, "*Isono sethu bubufazi*", which translated means, "Our sin is our womanhood" (Dlakavu 2016:103). This could certainly be in reference to the ceaseless abuse and violence perpetrated against women, even within the confines of supposedly safe institutions of higher learning.

A key indicator of why the discourse around FMF and RMF yielded fruitful engagement is how students across the country, in their thousands, demonstrated their collective dissent with countless instances of solidary being displayed, often across barriers of race, gender, and class (Bosch & Roberts 2021:135). Their democratic right to protest, enshrined in the South African constitution, was captured in a kaleidoscope of images, and the interpretation of the visuals associated with FMF and RMF hold the key to critically unpacking the gripping nature of protest imagery. A specific example of these transcendent images at play is epitomised in the global exportation of hashtag anchoring the Rhodes Must Fall movement, which eventually made it to the shores of the United Kingdom at Oxford University. The students at the British institution had very similar gripes with the aggressively hegemonic Eurocentricity of the prescribed curriculum and general academic ecosystem which were prompted by the central reference point of #RhodesMustFall in UCT (Ahmed 2019:6). This further gives credence to any scholarly notion underscoring the effectiveness of dialogue – inducing images that are transmitted and permeate in the online realm.

3.3 #RhodesMustFall: the symbolism of excrement

The events that led to hordes of protesting students launching mass scale and coordinated action on the campus grounds of South Africa universities, often giving rise to chaotic and violent confrontations with security personnel hired by the very institutions being admonished, did not take place in some unique vacuum. On the contrary, these protests were triggered by an impending crisis that the ruling government did not have the necessary foresight to resolve before allowing it to implode in such a spectacular fashion. Stuart Hall (1988:1) reiterates that, "a crisis is not an immediate event but a process: it can last for a long time, and can be very differently resolved: by restoration, by reconstruction, or by passive transformism". According to this definition, what arose out of RMF and FMF had all the hallmarks of a crisis, and one that could have been averted at that.

The Higher Education ministry's inability to pre-emptively neutralise the many dimensions related to the plight of South African students, particularly Black students, meant it was squarely at the centre of all the protest action on campuses. The economic components of the

student crisis are mostly linked to the limitations in state-funding models such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which has received a significant boost from the national fiscus in the period 2004/5-2015/6 (Badat 2016:3). Unfortunately, even with that the state purse is still not capable of accommodating all academically eligible students who do not have the financial resources to further their education, while simultaneously operating the funding scheme through highly inefficient systems for those lucky enough to qualify.

An ideological crisis had also been brewing for decades as students increasingly observed that an agenda towards decoloniality and transformative measures with regard to the curriculum and academic workforce was not being prioritised. However, what was peculiar about the existing state of affairs is that seemingly progressive institutions perpetually espoused disingenuous messaging about promoting policies that served to bolster post-apartheid universities as racially transformed spaces when this was discordant with the reality of Black students. Moreover, with specific reference to RMF, students could no longer supress their disdain for the reverence still being reserved for avowed colonialists such as Cecil Rhodes, whose statue stood on the Upper Campus of the University of Cape Town (UCT) years after the fall of apartheid (Castro & Tate 2017:202).

Figure 18 portrays Chumani Maxwele, a student who had become known as a glaring force within the RMF movement, plastering the statue of the infamous imperialist with a bucket of excrement. It is the assertion of Knudsen and Anderson (2018:18) that the gesture of defacing such a contentious monument with a protest tool that evokes a feeling of disgust within the observer is rooted in altering the symbolism attached to what is being memorialised. Furthermore, the desirability of the artefact is especially tainted due to it being situated in a highly public space making this a political strategy that comprehends the often-potent symbolism embedded in statues (Knudsen & Anderson 2018:26). Concurrently, armed with the biopolitical device of faeces, Maxwele made visible the hostile environment Black students were subjected to and how warranted an equally hostile reaction actually was; a sentiment that was squarely directed at those located at the highest rungs of university management. The student leader would subsequently offer up a more explicit explanation, clarifying why excrement was used as a form of protest in this instance, even revealing how the bucket of faeces had come into his possession. Maxwele stated the statue was defaced using portable toilets that countless disadvantaged citizens in townships were all too familiar with (Castro & Tate 2017:195). In essence, the images possibly serve as a representation of a kind of karmic, full circle moment, as the untenable conditions endured by the Black majority came back to

obliterate any perceived nobility attached to the imperialist figure being immortalised in the statue of Cecil John Rhodes.

Figure 18: #FeesMustFall leader Chumani Maxwele hurling a bucket of faeces at a statue of Cecil Rhodes, Cape Town, 2015. Photograph by David Ritchie. (*IOL*).

The visual theme of defacement is a noticeably reoccurring one when examining the imagery tied to RMF and the contentious Rhodes statue. Outside of being showered with human excrement, the statue in question was also subjected to an onslaught of paint, graffiti, and even covered in black refuse bags as a form of concealment. It, therefore, seems necessary to unpack what all these rebellious actions are rooted in. Firstly, the reason why defaced monuments are so symbolically powerful is because they can be said to retain a degree of collective memory or form the basis of a collective identity linked to a particular struggle (Liao 2010: 38). In other words, there is a message inextricably attached to what is represented in the statue, and this message, whether positive or offensive, contains resonance among those connected to a particular shared identity. Moreover, Sabine Marschall (2017:213) purports that socio-political protest that deploy defacement should not be observed through the same lens as malicious vandalism due to the lack of ideological motivation generally ascribed to mischievous damage such as gang-related graffiti.

Michael Taussig (1999:4) makes an argument of why the practise of despoiling can possess such significant weight for groups who feel aggrieved by its presence. He compares the act of defacement to that of a ritual where a doll or figurine is pricked with a needle to inflict pain on or kill the person it represents. This form of posthumous punishment was undoubtedly

encapsulated in the actions of Maxwele who made no attempts to hide his disdain for Rhodes as well as his ideologies. This point is further upheld by Marschall (2017:677) who contends that the life-like appearance of statues commemorating the likes of John Cecil Rhodes and Paul Kruger can often elicit confrontational engagements. These could include mutilating the statue, throwing objects at it, attempting to topple it, all in the hopes besmirching any positive legacy society may assign to it.

Figure 19: A student beating the defaced Rhodes statue with a belt moments before its removal, Cape Town, 2015. Photograph by Mike Hutchings. (*The Guardian*).

Even in the moments right before the Rhodes statue was to be removed by UCT, during the removal ceremony, a male student wielding a belt was seen whipping the colonialist's statue as the crowd cheered (Figure 19). Some might question the validity of the celebrations during this ceremony as the discourse around monuments venerating racist figures has ultimately been sporadic at best in the wake of the RMF movement. An argument could even be made that the moment generated a "false liberty" that unsurprisingly did nothing to meaningfully rupture the status quo rooted in South Africa's unequal and segregated past (Goodrich & Bombardella 2016:8). However, Mbembe's (2015:3) rebuttal to such a notion points out the political and social value that can be harnessed through the removal of contentious statues in shared spaces. He vehemently advocates for the "demythologising of whiteness" and views the critical discourse around statues as a positive step in that direction. Ultimately, the students of UCT reclaimed agency in what they deemed to be an inhospitable space that continuously served as an oppressive reminder. These dimensions coupled with that of a government lacking the political will required to deliver on its promise of transformed and equitable education for all

in a post-apartheid South Africa created the perfect cocktail of indignation that would be depicted in virtual spaces, and later on spill into the streets (Badat 2016:9). The image of a male student exhibiting masculine violence could also serve as a marker of the violence against female students that would eventually characterise the gendered discord within the FMF and RMF movements.

3.4 #FeesMustFall collective

As the RMF movement at UCT swiftly gained momentum and garnered extensive media attention, the shared sentiments of students who felt slighted by the tertiary education system began to overflow into other universities. The academic years of 2015 and 2016 saw a sharp escalation of student protests in institutions such as the University of Stellenbosch, Wits, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal to name a few (Thomas 2018:101). This all took place under the banner of #FeesMustFall and saw students displaying their ardent disapproval of the proposed hikes in university tuition for the following year.

Bosch and Mutsvairo (2017:78) assert that a significant portion of images documenting the protests that accompanied #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall comprise of photographs where students do not look directly into the camera. Because of this lack of eye contact with the audience, the viewer is consequently made to experience the protests as an invisible eyewitness (Figure 20). Brantner *et al* (2011:524) also posit that there was a deliberate aesthetic and narrative being conjured in the protest images tweeted out by those involved in the FMF campaign. They further assert that the intention of this was rooted in spurring personal conversation as the intended viewers could often see themselves in the student struggles being portrayed. Visual representations such as these can ultimately elicit rich visual narratives, giving the viewer the opportunity to empathise with those championing the activist cause (Doerr *et al* 2013:6). On the other hand, an on-air interview on a mainstream news outlet might not necessarily possess the same degree of resonance.

The photography documenting the FMF movements were consistently laden with the theme of solidarity. These were countless visual expressions of harmony among students that circulated on Twitter during the period of student protest. Most notably was the incident where white students formed a human shield around Black students during clashes with campus security and police which would go on to spark intense online debate about racial inequality as well as police brutality (Bosch & Mutsvairo 2017:78). However, a symbol that would steadily come to define the solidarity of the protesting students is that of the clenched fist (Figure 21). As the

FMF conversation on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook witnessed a significant uptick, a multitude of images showing students employing this unifying gesture circulated online (Hughes & Parry 2015:305). The image of fists emphatically raised in the air came to represent assertiveness and strength; traits the protestors undoubtedly tried to exemplify every time they assembled. There is even greater significance in the clenched fist being used to symbolise the continued struggle of students as the very same symbol was synonymous with the father of the Black Consciousness Movement, Steve Biko. Once a leader of the South African Student Organisation (SASO), he himself would mobilise masses of disempowered Black youth under the banner of Black empowerment amid inequality (Pather 2018:46). These sentiments are eerily echoed in the messaging of the more contemporary movements of RMF and FMF. Moreover, the powerful nature of this symbol is also evident in the fact that it has been able to transcend time, geographical locations, or any specific political movement.

Figure 20: #FeesMustFall protesters demonstrating against the increase in university tuition, Johannesburg, 2016. Photograph by Mike Hutchings. (*The Conversation*).

Figure 21: Wits students protesting against the proposed fee increases outside the Great Hall, Johannesburg, 2016. Photographer unknown. (*Tumblr*).

Even though it has been stated that social media users simply viewing images connected to online protest campaigns can be deemed onlookers, it should be noted that they inadvertently become active participants once they begin to engage with, reproduce, and disseminate visual materials on their social network feeds (Hänska & Bode 2018:4). The act of retweeting can be described as sharing and therefore somewhat endorsing an original tweet, further enhancing its visibility in the online arena (Bosch & Mutsvairo 2017:78). Therefore, if the viewer was to retweet a post depicting protest action at UCT or the University of Witwatersrand (Wits), they would no longer be a bystander in the context of the conversation spawned by the FMF hashtag.

3.5 The portrayal of Fallist movements in mainstream media

Although the various discourses taking place on a platform like Twitter can often devolve into what seems like futile bickering between stubbornly opposed screen warriors, the fact remains that some degree of conversation and exchange can be facilitated. This does not necessarily ring true for newspaper articles and other media formats like them. In the case of the FMF and RMF protests and their coverage in more conventional media, it quickly became apparent that those charged with informing the public about the latest on-campus happenings lacked a sense of precision in how they angled some stories.

Even the staunchest Fallist activist would struggle to refute the level of chaotic violence that took place across several campuses in the country. As clashes with private security hired by university management intensified, and some protestors felt increasingly frustrated with the duplicitous tactics of those they were negotiating with, student upheaval became a looming

reality. Once this became an actuality, and the destruction of property was an all too familiar protest manoeuvre, the mainstream news became attached to a worrying narrative; one of mindless violence being committed by uncontrollable students.

The chaotic scene pictured in Figure 22 was included in an article run by the British publication, *The Telegraph*. And like many other articles published during the respective periods of RMF and FMF, it placed an exceedingly strong emphasis on the violent nature of the protest without critical thought being given to the overall context of the movement's actions (Laing 2015). Local media outlets also emphasised the violence occurring at universities with headlines that elicited a sense of despair. These included headlines such as: 'Varsities on the brink of collapse', 'Varsities ablaze', and 'Campus strife flares' (Mavunga 2019:90). Student leaders were cognisant of the narratives permeating in mainstream media and argued that exclusively fixating on the violent eruptions while haphazardly glossing over the student's pleas was a great lapse in judgement that completely missed the point of underlying socioeconomic issues (Mavunga 2019:90).

By simply plastering violent images in newspapers without adequately unpacking the societal nuances that contribute to what is being depicted, the viewer could embrace misguided and incomplete perceptions. In Figure 22 we observe a horde of student protestors, who are predominantly Black, marching and cheering in front of a vehicle they have overturned. This action in isolation is unambiguously immoral and needlessly destructive. However, as previously argued, the headlines and photography of traditional media would have one believe that this kind of aggression happens in a social and historical vacuum, even with South Africa's complex and troubling past (Mavunga 2019:90). When newspaper articles disproportionately fixate on the financial implications of Black youth destroying public property, and partly ignore the plight of the very same Black students who come from violent existences in the form of poverty-stricken townships and informal settlements, that is the true crisis (Ndelu *et al* 2017:41). With these skewed depictions being prevalent in mainstream news outlets, and the Fallist movements receiving more scrutiny from the readership of certain publications, social media was a beneficial tool for students to have multi-layered discourse.

Another element of the protests that was repeatedly overlooked in mainstream media portrayals was the notion that student protestors were not a homogenous group whose values aligned at all times. As the later sections of this chapter will clearly illustrate, the Fallist movements were fraught with internal discord, which primarily stemmed from patriarchal tendencies to quash

any discourse around intersectionality (Mavunga 2019:91). Women and those from LGBTQIA+ communities were constantly on the receiving end of the very same brand of violent, male-fuelled patriarchy that characterised the visuals documenting the sometimes-unruly student protests. In fact, female protestors often lamented the efficacy of such approaches in the long-term and advocated for more productive outlets for their collective vexation (Mavunga 2019:91). So, Figure 22 gives credence to this observation as the female student captured in the protest image could be viewed as a symbol of feminist protest during both FMF and RMF, and its aversion to tropes present in masculine violence.

These types of assertions also correspond with literature that outlines the accepted characteristics of civil resistance movements lead by women. For one, Michael Beer (2021:26) purports that female protestors are less likely to escalate levels of violence when confronted with security forces, while also generally exercising more discipline in relation to violent acts within their movement. He further contends that fewer internal rivalries can be located in movements spearheaded by women. Therefore, it can be asserted that if such intricacies were better unpacked by journalists covering RMF and FMF, a more fleshed-out discourse with regard to the inner-workings of the protests could have occurred.

Figure 22: Wits students protesting in front of an overturned vehicle, Johannesburg. 2015. Photograph by AP. (*The Telegraph*).

3.6 Disruptive female protest and protests by the LGBTQIA+ community

From the onset of the student protest movements, particularly at the institutions of the University of Cape Town as well as the University of Witwatersrand, it quickly became

apparent that the female protesters were the unsung force dominating the mobilisation of both FMF and RMF. This was exemplified in the spirited leadership offered by the likes of incoming Student Representative Council (SRC) president Nompendulo Mkhatshwa and other student leaders such as Shaeera Kalla whose role within the movement would go on to be recognised as instrumental (Bosch & Mutsvairo 2017:80). Despite their penchant for occupying the role of leader, there were scores of instances where male protesters, who overtly upheld more patriarchal ideologies, often eclipsed the constructive progress being made through their displays of sometimes physically violent cisheteronormative aggressions. Incidentally, this aggressive behaviour was similarly witnessed, and in a sense foreshadowed, during the RMF protest where a male student was whipping the Rhodes statue. And although the protesting student body consisted of a wide-ranging spectrum of individuals, with some identifying as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, the men in the movement not only forcibly excluded these marginalised groups, but often subjected them to their explicit prejudice in the form of sexism, homophobia, and transphobia (Ndelu *et al* 2017:2). Therefore, the concept of intersectionality is, once again, relevant here as several attempts were made to side-line the segment of protesters who did not identify as heterosexual men – alienating a significant portion of students in the process. Essentially, these protests and the images they spawned encapsulated the battles presently undertaken by intersectional theory as well as fourth-wave feminism. While trying to simply define this iteration of feminism, Grady (2018) explains that fourth-wave feminism is "queer, sex-positive, trans-inclusive, body-positive, and digitally driven". In other words, women are now more vocal than ever about the insidious machinations of sexist power structures that seek to socially, politically, economically and culturally disadvantage women. During the Fallist period, this type of disruptive vocalisation was on full display in the form of naked student protests as well as online anti-rape campaigns which will be discussed in greater detail later on in this section.

As pictured in Figure 23, the protest space had the potential to be a highly antagonistic one, especially for those who had to confront the intersectionality of being Black, and either queer or transgender. For example, student activist Thenjiwe Mswane, who identifies as lesbian, is seen being manhandled by a prominent male leader of the FMF movement, Chumani Maxwele, while his fellow male protesters idly watch him perpetuating this form of misogyny. The image documents the consequence of an altercation between Mswane and Maxwele, after she repeatedly felt side-lined by the patriarchal proponents who were effectively attempting to co-opt the joint movement for themselves (Lujabe 2016:1). In relation to what this violent

encounter represents, Simamkele Dlakavu (2016:103) alludes to the vastly patriarchal gatekeeping that occurred during many FMF protests, ultimately obstructing the participation of Black queer and trans bodies in social movements that equally affected them.

Figure 23: Activist Thenjiwe Mswane being aggressively manhandled by male FMF leaders attempting to expel her from the protest, Johannesburg, 2016. Photograph by Felix Dlangamandla. *(News24*).

The conflict depicted in the above image is but a tiny glimpse into the chronic infighting that took place within the Fallist movements, whether behind the scenes, or on full display for the public's eyes. The picture is also a perfect representation of why #MbokodoLead[14] was spawned in the first place and helmed by the likes of Mkhatshwa and Kalla. In the same way that Thenjiwe is literally being strong-armed into leaving the protest space through forceful and physical means, proponents of the hashtag were confronted by patriarchal domination in other spheres as well. Many women and queer students shared accounts of how their attempts to operate outside the parameters of a "women's duties" were often impeded by their male comrades. This could manifest itself in the way men abruptly started singing their own protest songs, mere seconds after one had been started by a woman in the protesting crowd (Dlakavu 2017:111). Through the theory of intersectionality, Crenshaw (1991:1299) decries such displays of marginalisation and argues that the agency of Black women (particularly those belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community) is rarely considered when mobilising social

[14] #MbokodoLead (derived from the South African proverb "Wathint'abafazi, wathint'imbokodo) is a hashtag that was sparked by an image of student Nompendulo Mkhatshwa leading a 2015 Fees Must Fall protest at the University of Witwatersrand. It essentially became a rallying cry for more young women to embrace leadership role during the protests.

movements. This oversight is largely rooted in cultural and political spaces such as universities reproducing heteronormative practises that subsequently alienate a portion of the student body. In other instances, the women in the student movements were expected to cook for and feed their fellow Fallists, with the men even making disparaging and insensitive comments about the quality of the food they were being served (Dlakavu 2017:110). These tactics were essentially aimed at suppressing the voices of those who were not cisgender, heterosexual men, and would consequently serve as the necessary catalyst to trigger a shift in the agency women exercised when it came to shaping their own narratives in these movements (Ramaru 2017:92).

To combat the male-dominated space being adopted in the early stages of the Wits student protests, Black women were able to galvanise their maligned voices through the use of platforms such as WhatsApp and Twitter, where the hashtag #MbokodoLead trended across the country. The amplified visibility of women that was achieved, even though sporadic at times, counteracted the patriarchal influence being peddled by many of the men spearheading FMF. Images under the banner of #MbokodoLead sparked significant conversation and engagement on Twitter, with female students from a variety of universities identifying with the struggle of patriarchal overstepping. In a thoroughly orchestrated effort, Black women could be seen adorned in African *doeks*, most of them opting out of wearing any political regalia (Dlakavu 2017:111). This effectively served as a unifying strategy that aided women in reclaiming their agency as it pertained to the political direction of the movement.

Other displays of unadulterated female leadership that disrupted the sexist status quo within the FMF and RMF movements themselves was that of the breakaway #RUReferenceList[15] movement. Female students at Rhodes University in Grahamstown felt they were left with no alternative but to express their discontent with the apathy shown towards rape victims by the institution's upper-management and did so by revealing the names of eleven alleged rapists who were still roaming the campus. This culminated in a topless protest orchestrated by the rightfully frustrated cohort of female students who perceived Rhodes as a university that trivialised sexual violence against women and was tone deaf when it came to the conversation around rape in South Africa (Gouws 2018:4).

Overtly jaded with what they perceived as the lackadaisical approach of the university with regard to a culture of rape that reigned within the confines of Rhodes with impunity, students

[15] #RUReferenceList, and the subsequent movement it inspired, stemmed from a list that was anonymously posted on a Rhodes University Facebook group. This list contained the names of male students who were accused of rape by some of the female student body.

began their steadfast campaign to call for accountability at the institution. After an incident involving two female students assaulting alleged perpetrators, the women were swiftly charged and banned from completing their academic pursuits, a punishment that was meted out by the High Court (Gouws 2018:4). As a consequence, female activists vented their frustrations at the disproportionate level of punishment received by their comrades and decried a system where victims of sexual abuse were persistently victimised even after their traumatic ordeal. They juxtaposed this with a culture of actual perpetrators often being shielded by an inept court system. Those spearheading the #RUReferenceList also circulated visual protest materials such as posters on Facebook that documented the struggle of those facing academic exclusion, while also rallying support for the forthcoming topless march (Figure 24).

Figure 24: A poster uploaded and shared on Facebook documenting the expulsion of female activist Yolanda Dyantyi, Grahamstown, 2016. (*Facebook*).

As the topless march commenced, the female protestors in attendance began to disrobe as in their collective view, they had exhausted every other means of protest with all of them falling on the deaf ears of university management. In relation to the naked protests that took place under the banner of the Fallist movements, Young (2020:159) denotes the paradoxical nature of these naked protests as they unashamedly exposed the very same vulnerable bodies that would often be sexually violated by the men and male-dominated systems they were protesting against. However, the paradox the observer is confronted with is then harnessed into a commanding message that seeks to censure the largely distorted viewpoints relating to female sexual agency and male entitlement. This type of action can also be ascribed to the sex-positive and body-positive ideologies of fourth-wave feminism. In relation to protest, Sylvia Tamale

(2019:63) makes the very imperative distinction between a naked body and a nude body. Whereas nudity possesses connotations that prompt sexual invitations, nakedness, on the other hand, is more rooted in assertiveness and agency as it pertains to the shedding of clothing. Therefore, it can also be purported that women regard protesting naked as a form of necessary resistance that functions outside the parameters of more formal political structures that have yielded disappointing outcomes (Tamale 2019:7).

In a show of defiance and solidarity with the plight of the denigrated students at Rhodes University, several naked protests emerged out of other institutions throughout the country. A naked protest under the hashtag #IAmOneinThree was staged by Wits students, which represented the disturbing statistic alluding to the number of women who will be sexually violated in their lifetime (Ndelu *et al* 2017:2). The naked bodies from the countrywide protests could also be perceived as a mechanism to revolt against the patriarchal establishment that generally seeks to police, vilify, and fetishise the bodies of women. To further validate this very point, there were even several accounts of women who participated in the protest being shamed through disparaging comments online for revealing their "saggy breasts" (Dlakavu 2016:105). In Figure 25, some of the women attending the #IAmOneinThree march are pictured holding sjamboks. These sjamboks would go on to symbolise the spirit embodied throughout the naked protests as female activists were now actively fighting back against the gross injustices they were subjected to (Gouws 2018:5). As previously discussed in Chapter 2, which critically unpacked the vicious disposition of the apartheid regime through resistance photography, the sjambok was synonymous with an unjustified level of heavy-handed brutality exacted on the oppressed Black population. In the context of the naked protesters, they can be said to be reclaiming their power and agency after being victims of a similar brand of senseless and unhinged system of violence. Therefore, this particular protest expression of female students brandishing a weapon should not be equated to the culture of masculine violence alluded to through the belt used during the removal of the Rhodes statue.

Figure 25: A group of students participating in a naked protest at Wits while carrying sjamboks, Johannesburg, 2016. Photograph by Tebogo Tshwane. (*Wits Vuvuzela*).

Another prominent naked protest of a disruptive nature took place at a UCT art exhibition curated by the African Studies Gallery (Figure 26). As examined earlier in the chapter, both the FMF and RMF protest movements were marred by copiously insidious displays of exclusionary patriarchy. This was further embodied in the lack of representation highlighted in the art exhibition where only three of the nearly one thousand images being exhibited featured the faces of trans or non-binary people (Hendricks 2016:1). Those belonging to the UCT Trans Collective believed that this was tantamount to the explicit erasure of trans individuals and the indubitable contribution they had made while on the frontlines of the student protests. Because of this erasure, transgender members of the Fallist movements opted to disrupt the photographic exhibition as a way to counteract their omission from the deficient showcase. The trans students stripped naked in the gallery, blocked multiple entrances and passages, while also smearing red paint on selected photography which could symbolise the blood of the transgender community being spilled (Hendricks 2016:1). It is striking that the protest took place in those specific gallery spaces as Kathy Davis (2016:235) makes the observation that naked protests commonly occur in locations where imbalanced power relations can be thoroughly exposed. An argument could, therefore, be made that the naked bodies on the floor of that gallery pictured in Figure 26 not only spoke the same way that writing would speak, but also had the doubly disruptive vigour of a riotous protest (Young 2020:160). Dlakavu, Ndelu and Matandela (2017:107) refer to the ‘curse of patriarchy’ which has historically been a

destructive force on the African continent. In this particular instance, it can be asserted that the curse sullied the legitimacy of the exhibition in its entirety as it was ultimately cancelled due to external pressure initiated by the collective's protest movement.

Figure 26: Members of UCT's Trans Collective obstructing the path at #RhodeMustFall exhibition, Cape Town, 2016. Photograph by Ashraf Hendricks. (*GroundUp*).

3.7 The disremembered case of #RememberKhwezi

The Fallist movements of the mid-2010s were undoubtedly the main attraction when it came to the public's consciousness as it pertained to national student action. The #RememberKhwezi silent protest is another noteworthy feminist feat during that period. However, those who orchestrated the abovementioned protest were similarly active proponents of the FMF movement, and as women, understood the merit behind disruptive feminist protest in a space seized by male-dominance.

In August of 2016, four female university students staged a silent protest during the speech Jacob Zuma (who was president of the republic at that time) gave at the Independent Electorate Commission's (IEC) results briefing (Thamm 2016). All corners of the South African media as well as respected dignitaries were there to witness and capture this occurrence, and as pictured in Figure 27, for the bulk of his speech Zuma was completely oblivious to one of the ghosts of his past coming back to haunt him once more. Most likely because a silent protest was in effect, a strategy that Sophia Hatzisavvidou (2015:21) argues can stimulate political

thinking through channels that can sometimes transcend the inadequacies of verbal communication.

During the Jacob Zuma rape trial of 2006, his accuser Khwezi (which was a pseudonym given to Fezekile Kuzwayo to protect her real identity) was publicly vilified and labelled as sexually promiscuous by Zuma's legal defence, giving credibility to the belief that she was 'unrapeable' (Williams 2020:58). This form of slander levelled against Khwezi was echoed in numerous pockets of South African society, so much so that she had to seek refuge in the Netherlands in order to escape the constant harassment.

While offering an analysis of the events that took place during the silent protest, Mazibuko (2018:85) asserts that the visual meaning behind each individual placard carried by the four students is encoded with its own identifiable measure of importance. She emphasises how the first placard illustrating a hashtag is emblematic of a strategy that pre-empts a necessary discourse around Khwezi, as well as other sexual assault victims like her, who are traumatised by the mere act of seeking out justice. The placard with the writing, "10 Years Later" can be seen to signify the unchanged circumstance of women who have been failed by the country's criminal justice system, with accused perpetrators not being held to account by the law. Through this visual representation it is evident that the four women understand that sexist myths interlinked with rape culture are prevalent ten years on, especially considering that they were still making attempts to dismantle them within the Fallist agenda. The next word inscribed on the third placard is "Khanga". A khanga is a piece of traditional African attire women wrap around their bodies, or alternatively use to swaddle their infants. The significance of this word is that during the rape trial, it emerged that Zuma interpreted Khwezi clothing herself in a khanga as an open sexual invitation (Mazibuko 2018:85). Finally, the placard that reads, "Remember Khwezi" alludes to how at one point in time, the serving president of South Africa was accused of this heinous offense, yet the country at-large somehow seemed to have erased this from their collective consciousness. Simamkele Dlakavu (2016:1), who was one of the activists involved in the #RememberKhwezi protest, perfectly summed up the gravity of their body-political deed by expressing that, "We came out as 4, but stood as 10 000". Gestures such as these reinforce the notion that bodies assembling in the name of performing disruptive protest acts in front of a public audience (specifically political meetings) can challenge and persuade those in attendance to refashion policies and practices (Sparks 1997:75).

Figure 27: Former President Jacob Zuma reading a speech at the IEC, while four students protest his treatment of his alleged rape victim, widely known as Khwezi, Johannesburg, 2016. Photograph by Herman Verwey. (*The Guardian*).

3.8 Conclusion

It is not difficult to surmise that disruptive feminist discourse is quite evident in the visual depictions of contemporary South African protests. Countless women have endeavoured to take up the project of disassembling the various counter-productive manifestations of patriarchy and sexism, particularly within shared protest spaces that occur online or in the physical realm. Whether using hashtags such as #MbokodoLead and #RUReferenceList, or even the staging of naked protests at multiple universities, the theme of solidarity amongst female students as well as those from the LGBTQIA+ community is unquestionably evident. The images referenced throughout this chapter evoke a strong sense of defiance in the face of male-dominated spaces. Perhaps this imagery is also a commentary on the idyllic notion that student-led movements are progressive and inclusive spaces, devoid of the many patriarchal norms adopted in general society. Regardless, it is imperative to amplify the accomplishments of these movements within movements, as not to allow the erasure of dissenting and often maligned voices.

In a similar way, #AmINext? sought to remedy this form of erasure by publicly demonstrating against the GBV and the societal status quo that allows it to thrive. The following chapter unpacks several tropes, myths, and symbols that can be identified within the space this protest occurred in.

CHAPTER FOUR:

REPRESENTATIONS OF RESISTANCE DURING #AMINEXT?

4. 1 Introduction

> Gender violence is the most pandemic form of violence in the world. And we are just now witnessing a surge of popular opposition to these forms of violence (Davis 2018).

The above quote is extracted from a university lecture where the prolific African American activist and scholar, Angela Davis, underscores the insidious and often omnipresent nature of gender-based violence that continues to grip male-dominated societies. The male psyche is repeatedly referenced throughout this particular lecture. Using the case of Harvey Weinstein as an example, she bemoans American society's preoccupation with primarily seeking the punishment of a single individual or group of transgressors, instead of critically scrutinising the systems that allow abuse to fester and be sustained. This prevalent social quandary is one that has spawned multiple movements in South Africa, commanded by those who themselves are subject to the devastating effects of gender-based violence. In an article titled *Hatred of women thrives in South Africa*, Nonsikelelo Dube (2021) offers a scathing indictment of the status of misogyny in the country, which she argues is alive and well. She further deduces that patriarchal and misogyny-laced norms have managed to seep into nearly every facet of South African society, whether that be politics, media, the arts, university campuses and so on. The article was penned almost two years after the horrific murder of young UCT student, Uyinene Mrwetyana, and sadly, the sentiments promulgated through her words still ring true.

As the previous chapters have illustrated, women in this country have put up a perpetual fight to be viewed as human beings deserving of equal rights and the general safety of their lives. Strides have undoubtedly been made in efforts to eradicate regressive cultures associated with patriarchy and its unjust standards. However, as history has repeatedly documented, this is not an easy process where those perpetrating the violence, i.e., men, simply acquiesce to the reasonable request of treating women fairly of their own volition. Although the prospect of men willingly dismantling the destructive culture of systemic patriarchy at the behest of its most pronounced victims is an idealistic one, this should not disincentivise society from aspiring to it. Consequently, a more forceful approach, laden with protest action and displays

of unfettered ire, has showcased women refusing to have their voices marginalised until the transgressors grudgingly abide (Wolf 2013a:210).

In the beginning of Chapter 4, an abridged visual analysis of two female South African artists will be offered to underscore how artists have responded to the level of violence against women in the country. Next, there will be a section covered in this chapter that briefly highlights the implications of feminist activism being disseminated and amplified on social networking sites. A few examples of these feminist-centred online campaigns will be used to substantiate the arguments presented. Moreover, the origins and inner workings of the #AmINext? online movement and its proponents will be discussed. Thereafter, the focus will shift to attempting critically to outline and illustrate the significance of the #AmINext? protests through the lens of body politics and visibility. These are principles that exhibit why mass demonstrations result from the greater discourse around cultural norms that malign the voices of those who are least protected within a society. In addition to this, the final section of the chapter will strongly revolve around the symbolism and tropes that were used during the 2019 #AmINext? protests as seen in the protest imagery. Like many other demonstrations globally, protest signs were a ubiquitous feature during this pivotal march, and these signs largely contained a shared idea for those in attendance through collectively denouncing violence against women. Therefore, the analysis in this part of the chapter will primarily dissect the messaging and visual language of placards with anti-GBV slogans displayed by protestors, as well as the various protest gestures that were observed outside Parliament.

4.2 Art and sexual violence against women in South Africa

In the case of South Africa, the need for commentary from artists to denounce the scourge of gender-based violence is paramount as the country has long been associated with a rampant rape culture that also feeds into sky-rocketing femicide figures. In fact, a report written by the United Nations indicates that this type of culture being normalised is exceptionally regrettable, especially considering the robust set of laws in South Africa meant to protect the human rights of everyday citizens (United Nations General Assembly 2016). Albertyn *et al* (2007:300) assert that violent acts against women and children are symptomatic of a sick society, where the lack of morals and values underpin a great degree of instability in the social fabric.

As a response to such social blight, the argument of Susan Noyes Platt (2010:xiv) is highly relevant: visual expressions such as art can serve as potent countermeasures to serious societal injustices that can garner constructive reactions from a global audience. Moreover, it is the

assertion of Brenda Schmahmann (2004) that the works of South African female artists often grapple with themes of family life, the body, identity and womanhood, which are then reluctantly tethered to the ideologies that fuel rampant femicide and gender-based violence. Therefore, the aforementioned arguments give credence to the notion that South African artists are positioned to offer critical observations on the status of violence against women through their art.

In many of her works, Gabrielle Goliath grapples with the unabated presence of gender-based violence in South Africa (Hennlich 2017:20). Her modus operandus is no different in one of her most widely staged solo exhibitions titled *Elegy* (Figure 28), which seeks to reveal and contextualise the effects of rape culture on vulnerable bodies. In describing the central method employed when staging *Elegy*, Jayawardane (2019) explains:

> [it] comprises recordings of seven performances in which different female performers emerge from velvet-dark backgrounds and hold a single, clear, high note for as long as they can. As each performer begins to lose breath, she steps down from a low podium and exits to her right, and another performer steps up behind her, holding the same note, which ebbs and rises with the tessitura and timbre of her voice. Projected life-size on seven screens arranged in an arc, the performers constitute a resonating chorus, reminiscent of Greek and Roman theatre. Their shared note sounds out as purely – and for about the same duration – as a struck tuning fork.

Through this collective performance and display of mourning, the voices of the countless victims of rape and femicide are momentarily immortalised and imbued with a sense of merited reverence. The act of all the voices maintaining a single note is also quite striking because as Jayawardane (2019) pronounces, "wordless cries" are more than apt substitutes for words when one is attempting to express their pain and torment. Moreover, Goliath (2019:128) herself alludes to there being a difference between feeling the pain of others and simply being aware of its existence. *Elegy* is, therefore, centred around the notion of collective mourning, and the audience being privy to this process, while also being included in the dialogue evoked by the performances.

There are several characteristics demonstrating that Goliath's exhibition is not simply a two-dimensional account of the harrowing experiences of rape and gender-based violence survivors. The most striking ones though, are the use of a spotlight being shone on the female performers as well as the podium they are standing on. These implements instantaneously elevate the performers and their stories to a more focal status. Thus, through this intimate backdrop that centres around the personal narratives of survivors of sexual violence, the

traumatic after-effects of rape are given a more profound sense of reverence, unsullied by gratuitously voyeuristic gazes (Graham 2020:172). The staging of this performance piece could, in a sense, also be related to the staging of feminist protest that appears in the streets. In other words, images documenting the naked protests at Wits, as well as the marches that followed the #RUReferenceList, channel the same collective trauma Goliath conveys in the realm of art.

Figure 28: An exhibition of *Elegy* by Gabrielle Goliath, Johannesburg, 2019. Photograph by The Goodman Gallery. (*Mail & Guardian*).

Likewise, Diane Victor and the drawings she creates are concerned with documenting the many crimes and harsh realities of a post-apartheid South Africa (Law-Viljoen 2010:94). These hard-hitting depictions predominantly include the vulnerable as their subjects, a trait similarly present in Goliath's work.

Not only is Victor celebrated for the timely themes she explores, but her stylistic use of charcoal, ash, and smoke are equally praised. These mediums allow her to amply reflect the vulnerable condition of her artistic subjects while offering commentary on the "sinister aspect of human life" (van Woerden Duenas 2017:18). This interpretation is evidenced in one of her works titled *Wound Woman* as seen in Figure 28. The image portrays a naked woman being attacked with a barrage of objects which include an axe, a gun, a sjambok, a brick, a hammer,

and a screwdriver to list a few. In the midst of the violence and pain being inflicted on her, the woman being drawn has a very clear expression of aggravation on her face and eyes, indicating that she is in a state of discontent. McInnes (2010:5) takes note of such details when she states that, in an attempt to challenge the viewer, the women in Victor's art often make direct contact with them through their eyes. Moreover, the women Victor portrays are, in many instances, wounded or bruised, which is a characteristic of the artwork in question. It is also the assertion of McInnes (2010:4) that the dismissive and often brutally violent behaviour of male perpetrators are on full display in themes illustrated by Victor. An example of this in *Wound Woman* is the distant figure visible at the bottom of the drawing which can be presumed to be a man, who could once again be representative of the female body being at the mercy of male dominance and all forms of violence that it breeds. Although some might view these graphic depictions as taboo, Von Veh (2012:22) posits that such "taboos" are often rooted in Christian or patriarchal myths that seek to undermine femininity. Accordingly, the works of Diane Victor, and others crafted with similar intentions, can be effectively channelled to shift the status quo around these very societal forces that disenfranchise South Africa's women.

Thus, it can be argued that both these female South African artists shed some much-needed light on violence against women through their respective mediums. Furthermore, the manner in which the voices of women are lifted in their works can be likened to the key tenets that have sparked many women-led protests in the country.

Figure 29: Diane Victor, *Wound Woman*, 2017, Charcoal on paper, 163,5 x 114,2 cm, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg. (*Artsy*).

4.3 The online shift of feminist activism

The ideologies associated with modern feminism, as well as its subsequent movements, have experienced several waves of evolution since the discourse around women's rights first gained prominence in the late 19th to the early 20th century. In modern Western societies, women contesting their exclusion from the right to vote would be one of the pivotal starting points for the longstanding dialogue around their equal treatment. Quintessentially, all of the feminist philosophies that have been espoused over the course of several decades have formed the foundational and conceptual building blocks for many movements we presently witness (Riera 2015:6). In the 21st century, women and those from the LGBTQIA+ community are forced to manoeuvre through a diverse and complex web of intersecting inequities. This has consequently resulted in more recent literature bolstering the ideals of intersectionality, which advocates against dismantling systems of sexism, sexual discrimination, classism, and racism in isolation from one another (Crenshaw 1989:2). The majority of these present-day issues are deliberated on the online feeds of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. It is, therefore, prudent to delineate this digitally motivated paradigm shift, as well as critically evaluate the necessity of the engagement that takes place on these social media sites.

To uphold the notion that global women's issues are relatively far from being wholly eradicated is not a hyperbolic one. Women and girls from the current generation find themselves still

having to take up the mantle with regard to feminist causes such as sexism, sexual harassment, reproductive rights and gender-based violence, to name a few (Jouët 2018:135). Fortunately, with the rapid advancement of technology in the form of electronic devices (smartphones, laptops, computers, tablets etc.), as well as the internet and the numerous online platforms it houses (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc.), efficient avenues used to facilitate the activism around these causes have emerged. In the African context, Mutsvairo (2016:3) maintains that the sub-Saharan part of the continent has similarly experienced a copious surge in those opting to voice their political voices within the digital sphere. What has followed are online communities that collectively seek to robustly contest the sexist and patriarchal status quo through vigorous online engagement. Content creators, bloggers, influencers and activists are now able to cultivate and galvanise global audiences through not only textual information, but visual media as well (Martin & Valenti 2012).

Flores *et al* (2018:1) stress the necessity for feminist content in the form of information and images, as this is central to the discourses happening in contemporary feminism. This revitalisation in feminist debate has undoubtedly prompted a shift in the cultural Zeitgeist as it pertains to the position of women in society, so much so that it is the belief of some contemporary theorists that the current iteration of digital feminism represents a crucial turning point for feminist protest culture (Rodino-Colocino 2104: 364). One could purport that this is largely due to hashtag activism being a constructive and efficient means of circulating media when compared to earlier movements such as the Women's March of 1956 that did not have access to such technological ingenuity. In effect, the sharing of memes, videos, and photographs can often lead to increased dynamism in relation to online engagement among women and those from the queer community communicating or mobilising on digital platforms (Baer 2016: 18). Lastly, with social media being a dominant news source in terms of the general topics that govern public discourse, issues relating to sexism, gender inequality and social injustice have also received a greater degree of attention. This further supports the notion of a visual feminist turn as women now have a greater degree of control when mediating their visibility in the public realm.

The global feminist movements and protests of the mid- to late 2010s are indicative of the disillusionment mostly borne by modern women. A spate of these female-led protest actions have been widely documented worldwide, gaining extensive media coverage, all while producing an expansive network of online discussion that aims to propel the often-silenced voices of exploited women. One such protest movement that managed to capture the attention

of a far-reaching audience through the use of social media was that of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign which was initiated after the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok, Nigeria by the extremist group Boko Haram (Ofori-Parku & Moscato 2018: 2481). The large-scale visibility of the hashtag movement, which primarily developed on Twitter and received media commentary from international news outlets, initially began as a vehicle to ensure the safe return of all the girls who had been kidnapped. Through the utilisation of Twitter and the hashtag itself, Nigerians were able to essentially cut through the noise of other cultural and breaking news stories that were dominating the international news cycle. However, the discussion consequently morphed into the countless misgivings Nigerian citizens had in relation to the fruitless governance they were subjected to as a nation. Naturally, this included the state's inability to protect its women and girls from the extremely real threat of patriarchal dominance and violence (Green 2018: 1). Once global organisations and celebrities lent their voices and significant online platforms to the campaign, it experienced yet another shift in focus as issues around access to education for young girls were also ventilated. This was especially evident when the former First Lady of the United States of America, Michelle Obama, conveyed her support of the hashtag, which ultimately saw the above issues being amplified to a considerable global audience (Ofori-Parku & Moscato 2018: 2481).

Other prominent feminist movements that exploited the utility of online activism were the #MeToo movement as well as the SlutWalks that began to gain traction in 2011. With regard to the SlutWalk and its relevance to online feminist activism, its origins were rooted in attempting to combat the stigma and resistance levelled at female sexual agency. Rape culture, victim blaming, and "slut-shaming" are all issues the founding organisers wanted to address with the protest actions and the subsequent visuals that were chronicled on social networking sites. These actions included, but were not limited to, women arriving at the march dressed in sex-positive attire; essentially clothing that would most likely be viewed as oversexed and provocative within the confines of hegemonic society standards (Baer 2016: 18). It can be asserted that such representation was propagated in the hopes to subvert sexist and patriarchal norms concerning the accepted sexuality of women.

Correspondingly, the online mobilisation that ensued after the meteoric rise of the #MeToo movement underpinned a culture centred on the sexual degradation of women. The term saw its popularity proliferate in late 2017 after a slew of sexual harassment accusations were exposed by female victims on Twitter, one of the main offenders being high-profile Hollywood producer, Harvey Weinstein (Williams *et al* 2019: 374). Pictured in Figure 30, we can observe

a female attendee of a #MeToo protest wearing an outfit that communicates the level of harassment she has endured over the course of several years. The cut-outs of the hands presumably represent the times she had received unwanted physical contact from men, with the inclusion of the names of the perpetrators being a central piece of her attire. The outfit also has eyes stuck on it which are used to symbolise the constant male gaze the unnamed protester has been under while working in Hollywood. Williams *et al* (2019: 373) state that a culture of silencing victims was possible because of the disproportionate power dynamic enshrined in the work place, with men frequently in an advantaged position in relation to their female counterparts.

Ultimately, the sprawling nature of the hashtag movement highlighted the insidious presence of sexual harassment and male dominance in a wide range of social and working settings in general society. Thus, the online community of survivors sharing harrowing tales of harassment on Twitter was able to spark an online revolution that reinforced the agenda of gender equality and the policies that could make it an actuality (Hassan *et al* 2019: 2). This further disproves the notion that online feminism, and the discourse it catalyses, is simply ephemeral and does not affect public sentiment (Ofori-Parku & Moscato 2018: 2481). This is evidenced in how the attitudes generated by the #MeToo movement, and the negative ideologies they sought to counter, eventually transcended global boundaries, indicating a transatlantic influence emanating from the United States.

Figure 30: A #MeToo protester pictured in attire that highlights sexual abuse and harassment, Hollywood, 2017. Photograph by Lucy Nicholson. (*NBC News*).

It should also be noted that the robustness of the online mobilisation that accompanied the #AmINext? movement was not a novel event in the greater context of feminist activism in South Africa. Adding to this already bleak backdrop of violence inflicted by men, was the #MenAreTrash conversation that began mushrooming across various social media platforms. It became a prominent feature of online debate in 2017 after the murder of 22-year-old Karabo Mokoena, who was viciously killed by her intimate partner (Samanga 2017). Thus, a multitude of threads typed out by women sharing their personal accounts were spawned during this period. The hashtag in question was a searing, but equally poignant discourse that was sparked on Twitter in response to systemic violence against women and patriarchal norms that still persist (Mile 2020: 8).

Approximately one year prior to the 2019 march to Parliament, another online movement being spearheaded by women fed up with the existing situation resulted in the hashtag #TotalShutdown, which would ultimately spill over onto the streets of various provinces in the country. According to organisers, the objective of this movement was to publicly censure the rampant femicide and gender-based violence afflicting women. Using Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, this would be achieved through advocating for the halting of all economic activity on 1 August 2018 (Njilo 2018). Once the hashtag migrated to the streets, the presence of men at the protests was strongly discouraged as the participants wanted to maintain a protected and secure environment for those in attendance. However, male allies were urged to support by donating to the movement or staying away from work in solidarity with their cause. Furthermore, a distinct emphasis was placed on not only women being afforded the space to voice their frustrations, but gender non-conforming individuals and members of the LGBTQIA+ community as well. As pictured in Figure 31, in a show of unity, attendees marched dressed in red and black clothing. This wardrobe choice was selected to signify all the mourning and blood spilled as a direct result of the soaring cases of femicide (Moosa 2018: 1). In line with the use of such strategic visual markers during protests, Doerr *et al* (2012:4) state that this choice of collective protest attire defines those demonstrating as allies and simultaneously isolate shared identities and cultures within the group. With regard to the use of colours and clothing designs, the necessary room is also created to produce engaging narratives around a particular social movement; in this case, the obscenity of South Africa's rape culture (Doerr *et al* 2012:4).

Figure 31: A group of #TotalShutdown protesters holding a banner, East London, 2018. Photograph by African News Agency. (*IOL*).

4. 4 #AmINext? and its online presence

The #AmINext? online campaign can be viewed as a movement that continues the tradition of upholding ideals related to gender equality through the use of this social networking site. As Bosch *et al* (2018: 2165) state, in the era of #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall, activists have, in tandem with more traditional media sources, heavily exploited social media platforms to enhance public engagement with pertinent societal issues. Its inception was a culmination of female voices responding to a culture of unabated gender-based violence in South Africa. The country had been grappling with perpetually grim crime statistics that underpinned the unbearable circumstances women and queer folk were forced to endure. However, after the news of the gruesome murder of a 19-year-old UCT student began circulating on mainstream media as well as multiple social media platforms, the need for mass-scale demonstration became more apparent than ever.

After the death of Mrwetyana, a host of social media users on Twitter and Instagram, including celebrities and social media influencers, banded together online in an effort to broaden awareness with regard to spiralling femicide. One such celebrity was South African actor Siv Ngesi, who, through his tweets, notably helped establish the #SAShutdown hashtag that consequently supplemented the online efforts of #AmINext? (Morshedi 2020:8). As a result, platforms like Twitter became the locale for the dissemination of visual content that spoke to

the social and cultural issue underscoring the prevalence of gender-based violence in South Africa.

Stewart and Schultze (2019:1) define solidarity as "an individual's feelings of devotion and commitment to others in a collective". With this definition in mind, there is no question that feminist solidarity was an ever-present trope in the #AmINext? online movement, with specific reference to the personal accounts that were shared by women championing the cause. In the digital age, social media platforms have facilitated the hybridisation of protest movements, as it is now possible for mass mobilisation to appear on the internet as well as in the real-world setting (Stewart & Schultze 2019: 1). As evidenced in #AmINext? and the many accounts of abuse and sexual violence that were expressed, the displaying of feminist solidarity represented a noteworthy paradigm shift in relation to how South African women advocated for their rights in contemporary society. Through the narratives that were shared in tweets under the hashtag, women expressed that they lived in a constant state of fear, and this feeling of distress was only heightened after the killing of Uyinene. In addition to this, #AmINext? also offered a platform for woman to console and be consoled by others who had very similar lived experiences (Morshedi 2020: 30). This gives further credence to the notion that online feminist solidarity is central in resisting against gender inequalities and injustices that squarely affect the lives of women (Pullen & Vachhani 2019: 2).

Another salient theme that is present in the #AmINext? online movement is the memorialising of victims who have perished due to the scourge of femicide. There were several instances of users on Twitter posting pictures of murdered women in the hopes of not only raising awareness, but also attempting to further humanise them so that they were not merely viewed as statistics. Figure 32 illustrates a collage-like image posted by a Twitter user that contains the photographs of different women recently murdered in the country. These photographs portray victims from a variety of racial backgrounds and ages, further calling attention to the pervasiveness of gender-based violence. Furthermore, other tweets posted during this time express a communal sentiment of ire directed at the men responsible for allowing this brutal violence to endure. The discourse in terms of femicide victims also included the expansive list of South African women who have lost their lives at the hands of men, with the high-profile cases of Karabo Mokoena, and model Reeva Steenkamp being specifically referenced (Walker 2019: 1). Relating to such displays of emotion and collective grief on social media, Wiederhold (2017: 585) reveals that:

> Young people – digital native, people who grew up with the means and interest to express themselves online – are able to form new bonds more fluidly as they grapple with the unique cocktail of emotions that arrive from someone's death.

Thus, what can be deduced from the above assertion is that the establishment of social networking sites such as Twitter has reconfigured the way users produce and disseminate their personal narratives, which also includes feelings of grief. Moreover, these digital forms of memorialisation (as seen in Figure 32) are rooted in an aesthetic that effectively captures the collective identities and values of those who identify with them (Giaxoglou 2021: 3).

Figure 32: A collection of photographs portraying victims of gender-based violence and femicide, 2019. Taken from Twitter account. (*Twitter*).

Butler (2020: 129) has lamented that "sexual violence carries with it the threat of death, and too often, it makes good on that promise." This quote offers a sobering perspective from the lens of the most vulnerable groups in our society. And it is this very perspective that was mirrored in a piece of visual media that was widely distributed under the banner of #AmINext? on Twitter. A video of South African-born Hollywood actress, Charlize Theron, quickly began to resurface as the country and online community was still reeling from the murder of Mrwetyana. In the 1999 anti-rape campaign video (pictured in the tweet in Figure 33), Theron is seated in a chair, staring into the camera as she enlightens the audience about the pitiful state of gender-based violence in South Africa. At one point in this clip she states, "It's not easy to say what the men in South Africa are like because there seem to be so few of them out there."

Through the online engagement sparked by the video, it was evident that this level of denunciation carried a strong sense of resonance with those watching it even 20 years after it was originally aired (Morshedi 2020:8). D'Ambrosi *et al* (2018:77) also outline the crucial nature of such campaigns being circulated on social media by emphasising that anti-GBV visual content leads to viewers being more informed, as well as those consuming it being more receptive of gender equality-related values.

Ultimately, the relevance of the video in contemporary South Africa proved to be an indictment of the failings of the state, an analysis echoed by Theron herself who addressed the resurgence of her campaign ad video in a response tweet of her own. Sadly, the chilling irony behind the video gaining traction in 2019 is that 20 years before its social media revival, the ad campaign was banned from South African television due to an influx of complaints from men who regarded it as too offensive (Morshedi 2020:23).

Figure 33: A screenshot of a tweet containing the banned Charlize Theron anti-rape campaign, 2019. Taken from Twitter account. (*Twitter*).

4.5 Body-politics and visibility of protest of feminist protest

Once a protest movement has gained sufficient momentum through hashtags and the collective messaging they propagate, the next ideal manifestation of this online activism is physical bodies assembling in the streets, i.e., public spaces. Theorists have long emphasised the significance of our bodies being the vessels that facilitate our experiences in the world. Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes that the body is our "anchorage in the world" (1962:144). However, one glaring inadequacy of more dated literature related to body politics is the omission of sexual and gender specificity within these experiences, something that feminists decry in their critiques of Merleau-Ponty's accounts (Parkins 2000:61). To compensate for this shortfall, the writings of famed philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler consistently espouse ideas related to the necessity of bodies, and particularly bodies belonging to groups of people often flung to the periphery of gender-related discourse, protesting in unison with one another. In other words, those who identify as women or as being a part of the LGBTQIA+ community are at the centre of her bio-political discourse.

In order to unpack the significance of feminist activism revealing itself in mass demonstration, one of the most basic tenets of body politics must be explained: "For politics to take place, the body must appear" (Butler 2011:2). What can be inferred from this is that any political stance challenging the status quo should be voiced in the public domain as this is a constructive means of scrutinising social processes as well as cultural norms (Baer 2016: 23). Brown and Gershon (2017:1) also uphold that, certain elements of citizenship are not afforded to bodies that do not align with 'accepted' cultural, social, or political practises, resulting in their disenfranchisement from the rest of society. In response to this, bio-political gestures seek to rectify this form of blatant and discriminatory denigration. With reference to the #AmINext? movement, cultural norms that allowed the different iterations of gender-based violence to thrive were being exposed and loudly denounced in a public setting.

When offering further analysis on the bio-political nature of protest, Butler (2011:2) affirms that the act of bodies converging with the intention of protesting for a joint cause can often be a potent performative exercise. She underscores that this powerful force emanates from these bodies occupying a space in unison, while at the same time, registering each other visually as well through their voices. Therefore, once these bodies have appeared together within a space, they no longer appear in an individual capacity, but act and move politically towards a

collective cause. This stance is further supported by the works of Hannah Arendt (1958:201) who describes the concept of plurality as it relates to bodies congregating together, and how the bio-political nature of this phenomenon allows for the defiance of unequal power dynamics. Likewise, it can be asserted that the feminist movements that have been previously highlighted throughout this thesis were all established with the intention of dismantling patriarchal social structures through the implementation of body politics.

As the thousands of aggrieved #AmINext? protesters, alongside their allies, marched in their droves, the message that was being despatched became unquestionably clear: The perpetual brutality of men in the wake of Uyinene's murder laid bare the rampant nature of femicide and sexual violence in the country. Women were in a constant state of fear as any attempts to achieve a semblance of bodily agency were stifled by social norms that put those very same bodies in life-threatening danger. As Butler (2004:21) argues, through the bio-political, we are able to grasp fully the concept of mortality, vulnerability, and agency, especially as they relate to various forms of violence. In the context of the #AmINext? marches that ensued in Cape Town, the protesters physically being in a public space while advocating against gender-based violence and femicide, further highlighted the vulnerable predicament millions of women presently find themselves in.

Another key element of bodies gathering in a public or political space is that they are then able to oppose the legitimacy of unchecked power structures, whether this be in the form of governments, corporations, or systems of patriarchy. Butler (2011:4) asserts that in the instance of bodies protesting in the streets, they essentially speak in the language of resistance. Therefore, when female protesters congregate, this language of persistent resilience is often directed at sexism, misogyny, and male violence which can be said to be systemically entrenched in society through the inaction of these powerful institutions. Moreover, it can be argued that such acts of bodily resistance in the protest setting serve as a means of forming new ideological viewpoints in spaces that have previously upheld problematic and unjust norms (Qoza 2020:74).

The idea of visibility when it comes to the act of protesting is also an invaluable tool, one that Brighenti (2010:4) views as crucial in claiming a contested territory and challenging relationships of power. It is also the argument of Hayward and Komarova (2019:62) that the space where a protest takes place is also not necessarily the most important element, but rather, how the performance of the protest movement appears in public. In other words, though the

#AmINext? march occurred outside of Parliament, which is an extension of government, held some level of relevant symbolism, the fact that thousands of bodies appeared peacefully in the name of a common cause meant that a socially-produced space was created to adequately ventilate their grievances. Lastly, mobilising protest movements in a manner that makes them more visible also produces increased visibility for unresolved social issues and can garner greater support from the public; with bystanders ideally becoming active proponents of the same causes (Doerr *et al* 2012:6).

4.6 Analysing the visual devices, symbols and gestures of #AmINext?

Those engaged in protest action have a plethora of strategies at their disposal to enact political, economic, social, and psychological pressure on various structures that wield institutional power (Beer 2021:11). This action can, therefore, take the form of either violent or non-violent civil protest. In the context of female-led movements in South Africa, the #AmINext? march has ushered itself into the annals of protest history. Accordingly, it seems pertinent briefly to probe the nature of the protest in question, and how the tactics employed contributed to its significance within the public consciousness regarding women's issues. Since the protest images were captured amid massive protest groups exploiting symbols and tropes, there is also validity in unpacking exactly why and how the visual messaging being portrayed is so significant in the context of feminist visual culture (Veneti 2017:11).

A mass gathering of passionate protest goers fighting for what they believe is a just cause, and a heavy presence from the South African Police Service (SAPS) are two components of a protest that ordinarily lead to a chaotic conclusion once the two entities converge. However, in the case of #AmINext?, the events of that day were devoid of the routine clashes between protesters and police. Accounts recorded from those who were among the protesters marching to Parliament indicate that their demonstration remained peaceful throughout its duration, something which was in accordance with their mandate for the actual protest (Morshedi 2020:32). If one peers back into the history books, non-violent tactics were also a defining characteristic of the 1956 Women's March at the Union Buildings. The peaceful outcomes of these female-led movements should not be viewed as some arbitrary coincidence. As Butler (2020:137) argues, the innate prejudice levelled against non-violent protest methods is inextricably rooted in a societal bias towards masculine behaviours. By the same token, this propensity to favour masculinity also denotes that any form of outright passivism is more akin to femininity, and therefore a much less effective protest strategy to employ. Furthermore, the

concept of non-violence is, in itself, a powerful tool in a demonstrator's arsenal as it exposes and interrogates the sometimes-violent nature of government responses to citizens protesting in the streets (Butler 2020:137).

Even though the #AmINext? march that transpired on 5 September 2019 gained local and international attention for its mass-scale turnout, it should be pointed out that there was another iteration of the #AmINext? protest that did not receive the same degree of focus. What is especially fascinating about these two protests is that they were only one day apart, but could easily be construed as polar opposites in terms of their nature. While the main #AmINext? protest was largely uneventful when it came to violent clashes, the protest that took place on 4 September outside the Cape Town International Convention Centre was marred by intense scuffles with law enforcement (Selisho 2019).

Figure 34: Demonstrators being hosed down with water cannons by police, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Ashraf Hendricks. (*Al Jazeera*).

Figure 35: A protester being arrested by Cape Town police, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Ashraf Hendricks. (*Al Jazeera*).

The crux of the more violent protest was effectively the same as the non-violent one. Those demonstrating were advocating for an immediate end to rape culture and femicide. Figure 34 and Figure 35 illustrate some common hallmarks of South African protests in that police can be observed using excessive tactics in response to crowds gathering for a valid cause. Typically, the use of stun grenades, water cannons, and teargas on civilians demonstrating peacefully is in no way an isolated phenomenon. Furthermore, it is the assertion of Lodge and Mottiar (2015:2) that there has been a steady upturn in heavy-handed police responses in post-apartheid South Africa. As a result, this has caused protest spaces to be increasingly violent due to protesters reciprocating the violence they encounter at the hands of law enforcement. One commonality between the two #AmINext? protests that could be detected, though, was the use of posters or other visual implements with gender-based violence-specific messaging written on them. In Figure 34, the female protester is holding up a sign that simply states, 'ANGRY'. This uncomplicated phrasing can be said to be in relation to the general sentiment held by women who are subject to a system that is perceived as unwilling to tackle femicide and the epidemic of rape. In addition, one could view this image and allege that it invokes the trope of the angry feminist. However, Tomlinson (2010:4) maintains that the use of this label is often a disingenuous tactic exploited by those who benefit from the status as a means of suppressing feminist social movements. Therefore, the photograph and its text should not simply be read as an unreasonable, man-hating expression of rage, but rather the representation of a justified disposition in the face of rampant violence against women.

Citizens involved in peaceful protest have a myriad of options in terms of what apparatus they can use to enhance their social or political statements. The practice of demonstrating with visual implements is commonplace globally. This is most likely tied to the notion that in addition to the voices and cries of demonstrators, protest materials with textual slogans and messages, such as flags, posters, placards, and banners, are a means of effectively expressing one's disposition in relation to a particular cause (Philipps 2012:6). To reinforce this point, Birgit Wolf (2013a:210) emphasises that images and symbols found in mainstream media can often rely on visual codes that perpetuate erroneous myths and stereotypes. Therefore, alternative forms of representation and messaging in the protest context should not be snubbed simply because they do not subscribe to the same hegemony of mainstream media formats. Furthermore, in probing the value of such visual implements being displayed at protests, Gillian Rose (2016:139) affirms the enlightening nature of discourse analysis. When describing the real-world application of discourse analysis she states, "In particular, discourse analysis explores how those specific views or accounts are constructed as real or truthful or natural through particular regimes or truth" (Rose 2016:140).

Figure 36: Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground)*, photographic silkscreen on vinyl, 1989, The Broad, Los Angeles. (*The Broad*).

The exhibition of artistic or visual expression to denounce all forms of marginalisation of women can undoubtedly be considered an integral component in the greater discourse relating to gender equality. These representations, whether they are revealed through art, photography or film, expose and problematise the ills brought about due to male dominance. One only needs to dissect the work of American artist Barbara Kruger to understand exactly why these representations are so vital to visual culture and feminist theory. Dubbed a collagist of sorts, Kruger incorporates inventive graphic design motifs to fashion photomontages with the aim of dismantling patriarchal and sexist ideals that needlessly prompt suffering for the female psyche and body (Tseng 2004:209). Her work is often touted for its ability masterfully to unpack the bio-political nature of traumas and pain experienced by women through poignant messaging found in her artwork. As seen in Figure 36, the image she creates here, like the rest of her collection, speaks to issues around domestic violence, female bodies in crisis, as well as a sexist agenda that disenfranchises women using techniques that differ from her contemporaries (Calak 2008:155). Also, Figure 36, which is an untitled art piece which would ultimately be unofficially labelled as *Your Body is a Battleground*, relates to the unremitting fight for agency that women are burdened with, even though the spoils of this war are their own bodies and autonomy (Calak 2008:156). Fundamentally, Kruger's work examines the degree to which women's bio-political agency is constantly threatened by patriarchal structures that serve as a controlling presence in their daily lives. The text written on this particular art piece could easily be paralleled to the type of visual implements one would witness at a female-led protest such as #FeesMustFall or #AmINext?. Therefore, through the lens of such a framework, the protest materials and the discourse they evoke could be analysed as being helpful in persuading those who view them to support a particular cause. In the case of #AmINext?, the visual devices captured in the protest imagery were a pivotal feature of the march itself, and employed significant tropes, symbols and visual devices that should be explored in detail.

4.6.1 The trope of violence against women

When scanning through the collection of the photographs taken on 5 September outside Parliament, a recurring theme is promptly unveiled – one that signals the perception of needless violence against the women of South Africa[16]. These images evoke a sense of concern in the viewer as the allusions that are communicated, some more explicit than others, are to the

[16] The collection discussed here is primarily comprised of protest images taken from photo essays, online news articles and photographs posted on social media sites.

pervasiveness of the violence experienced by women at the hands of men. Additionally, death being the subsequent outcome of this male-sponsored violence is not shied away from in these representations either, a fact that adds to the enlightening, but equally bleak quality of the visuals.

Figure 37: A female protester dressed in a white T-shirt with red handprints, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Arron Moos. (*The Journalist*).

The above image (Figure 37) portrays a female attendee of the #AmINext? protest wearing a plain white T-shirt with red handprints that are presumably meant to represent blood-stained hands. It should be noted that the blood here is a symbolic depiction of physical violence that has occurred, even if it is hinted at in an implicit manner (Wolf 2013b:249). As a consequence of this gesture taking place at a protest decrying the abuse and femicide of women, it is plausible to assert that the bloody hands in this instance belong to the high number of perpetrators responsible for the killing of women in the country; a societal blight that initially sparked the hashtag and subsequent march. Avi Sooful (2018) has also long contended that, with the right visual messaging, T-shirts have the potential to become sites of embodied

resistance. She goes on to state that a unique design advocating for social or political change personalises the stand of the individual wearing the T-shirt.

In relation to the red handprints depicting bloodstains, the whiteness of the T-shirt that the protester is dressed in demands analysis as well. The colour white has long been associated with the concepts of purity, innocence, and morality, often conjuring positive emotions when compared to other hues on the spectrum of colours (Clarke & Costall 2008:408). The T-shirt could, therefore, denote the ideas of purity and innocence in relation to women, and with the handprints essentially soiling the protester's white T-shirt, the purity of women has been tainted by the stained hands of men. In supporting such a notion, Gary Sherman and Gerald Close (2009:1019) state that white objects are "universally understood to be something that can be stained easily and that must remain unblemished to stay pure." Accordingly, it can be proposed that the act of femicide or violence against women is one that stains their pure humanity in a manner that lays bare the immorality of men who perpetuate such brutality, along with the societies that permit it. In summary, this particular protest gesture in the context it was represented in should not be viewed as trivially performative. On the contrary, the visual of her T-shirt's whiteness being stained mirrors the writings of Kathleen Connellan (2012:16) who affirms that "[w]hite is often a colour or 'non' colour chosen to euphemise brutality and pain."

In examining this image even further, the imagery of blood-stained handprints could also be interpreted as an allusion to menstrual blood and its various representations in visual culture. More specifically though, outside the context of ritual practises, female artists, and women in general have used menstrual blood as a tool of expression in paintings, performance art, and photography in what is referred to as menstrual performance (Manica & Rios 2017:2). There are also instances where the visuals spawned from these menstrual performances are used as conduits for discourse within feminist movements and protest action (Bobel 2010:121). The feminist spirit of such performances can equally be ascribed to those who participated in #AmINext?, like the women adorned in the T-shirt in question. Furthermore, when unpacking some of the coded meanings of a menstrual performance, Manica and Rios (2017:3) maintain that "substances that breach the natural bounds of the body, such as menstrual blood, are symbolically coded as pollutants and perceived as possible threats to social order." Thus, the reference to social order being threatened here speaks directly to the objective of those who propelled the #AmINext? movement.

One can, therefore, assert that the selection of this particular piece of apparel, as well as the gesture inextricably connected to it can be said not only to be an ordinary protest image, but also a symbol being communicated through the self-expression of the protester (Doerr *et al* 2012:5). There is also something to be said about the confrontational and direct nature of such symbolism. Juris (2005:415) suggests that these kinds of tactics express the dissenting undercurrent present within the protest group, and is meant to be deciphered by those in power alongside the media and non-participating spectators.

Such a feminist statement and denouncement of male violence undoubtedly corresponds with the literature around this topic. For example, Nöthling-Slabbert (2006:6) alludes to the worrying and longstanding South African trend of women being abused and, in many cases, killed by their intimate partners. She further laments femicide figures that indicate the fact that, over the decades, this violent crime has begun affecting younger women in an increasing manner. If one evaluates the many prominent cases of young women being murdered in South Africa, as well as this generation of female youth currently at the forefront of various women-led movements, this is certainly not a far-off observation. Abrahams *et al* (2009:550) uphold this notion as in 2009, they found that women between the ages of 14 and 29 were the second most vulnerable age group when it came to South Africa's femicide rate (narrowly behind those between the ages of 30 and 44 who are especially affected by intimate partner violence).

In continuing with the bloody motif, Figure 38 reveals a protester dressed in white protective gear of some kind, with the words, "My body, not your crime scene!" written on it. This imagery coveys a two-pronged message through both the textual and symbolic. In the image, the article of clothing appears to be smeared in blood stains which could be said, once again, to represent all the blood of women that has been spilt as a result of gender-based violence. The second component, which is the written message, relates to the rampant nature of femicide and how it robs women of their bodily agency, reducing them to nothing more than crime statistics. Gqola (2007:118) supports this notion as she asserts that violence against South African women is so imbued in the country's culture and public discourse, that it has, in a sense, been normalised by society. An interesting observation with regard to the textual element of this protest gesture is that, in a way, it harkens back to the art of Barbara Kruger who consistently delivers commentary on the female body in crisis (Tseng 2004:210). Even though the message displayed through the writing does seem to suggest such a crisis, it also indicates a strong-willed affirmation from the perspective of women attempting to claim back agency of their bodies in the face of femicide and sexual violence.

The interplay between these elements comes into effect once you register that the protester is wearing the professional protective equipment usually sported by forensic pathologists at crime scenes. Therefore, it can be said that this image is specifically critiquing the nature of femicide in South Africa and how it has put women in a vulnerable position that heightens their chances of being examined by a forensic pathologist. Symbolic meaning like this is intrinsically effective as it relies on a 'synthetic intuition' on the part of the viewer to internally dissect the messaging of the image, which ultimately enhances their understanding of it (Panofsky 1957: 38).

Slightly deviating from the use of a poster, Figure 39 presents a male protester who is instead holding up what appears to be a replica of a tombstone. Resembling Figure 38 in a sense Figure 39 also contains a symbolic message as well as text-based message that work in unison to relay meaning to the viewer. The symbolism attached to the tombstone in the context of the #AmINext? protest is essentially that femicide is the cause of an untold number of women being buried. So, effectively all these burials will require a tombstone of some kind, a reality which this visual implement is critiquing. There is also some perceived irony with regard to the written message spray painted on the model tombstone which reads, "We will not rest until we have peace". The word 'rest' could be playing on the idea of resting or passing on. Consequently, the interplay between the symbolism and written text is even more evident here as the message is rooted in addressing the needless killing of women, while also declaring that movements such as #AmINext? will not cease to espouse their feminist beliefs.

Figure 38: An #AmINext? demonstrator with, “My body, not your crime scene!” written on their clothing, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Anso Thom. (*Daily Maverick*).

Figure 39: Male protester holding a protest tool, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by The South African. (*The South African*).

Likewise, a visual device that is present in Figure 38 and Figure 39 is one of dramatisation. Fasnacht (2021:230) explains that in the context of protesting, dramatization is essentially storytelling through a performative act. In other words, this is a form of protest that goes beyond simply being physically present at a demonstration, but also involves an element of performance that is able to weave in certain narratives the attendees actively need to convey. In relation to the protester pictured wearing the criminal pathologist attire, it is apparent the imagery observed in both photographs is communicating the grim narrative attached to the lived experiences of women in South Africa. One other critical purpose of protest images that illustrate dramatization is for them to highlight 'a possible future scenario by dramatizing it' (Fasnacht 2021:231). Therefore, it can be asserted that a compelling narrative is consequently interwoven into this image that points out the looming danger women can potentially find themselves in, which is mostly depicted through its emotive and performative nature[17].

4.6.2 The trope of fear

Some of the protest posters seen during the #AmINext? protest seem to underscore a genuine sense of fearfulness shared by women. There are undoubtedly indicators in the messaging of certain posters that signal a clear uneasiness along with communicating a desire for this disquiet to dissipate. Moreover, the fear that women have of being killed, or having their bodies sexually violated in any way, is a biopolitical quandary that acknowledges that "violence is not only something that is done to an already established body, but rather, various forms of violence are part and parcel of the production of bodies that are subjected to violence" (Wilcox 2015:15).

[17] There is also something to be said about the problem of sexual violence in present-day South Africa and the residual effects of the violence that occurred during apartheid. Gouws (2021) and Britton (2006) offer their assertions on the validity of this correlation and how it has contributed GBV in South Africa.

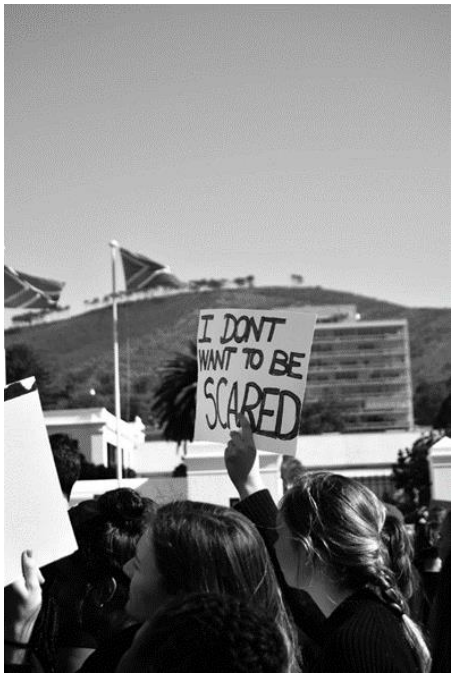

Figure 40: A protester carrying a sign at the #AmINext? march, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Arron Moos. (*Arron Nathan*).

A shared sentiment that is present in the protest imagery of #AmINext? is that of fearfulness. Generally speaking, the trope of fear, and more specifically fear because of one's womanhood, can be observed in the messaging of placards that have been displayed in multiple protests advocating against gender-based violence in the country. With regard to the poster pictured in Figure 40, the messaging here indicates a desire for an existence where fear of men is not such a dominant force in the life of women. The text here simply reads, "I don't want to be scared", which alludes to the presumably female protester currently being in a perpetual state of fear but wanting the taxing cycle to come to an end. A declaration is being made, with the protester demonstrating they want to be liberated from systems of violence and doing so in the clearest terms possible.

Figure 41: Protester holding up protest sign at #AmINext?, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Rodger Bosch. (*News24*).

Figure 42: A poster being displayed at #AmINext? march, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Anso Thom. (*Daily Maverick*).

Moreover, it is evident that the message or slogan which reads, "I don't want to die with my legs open", garnered a degree of popularity amongst the protesters as it was used in multiple

posters, an observation which can be spotted in Figures 41 and 42[18]. The insinuation here is that once an abusive perpetrator has raped a woman, the fear of subsequently being murdered after the initial traumatic ordeal is a prevalent one. Through dissecting this particular statement, as well as the violent context South African women live in, one can deduce that the written testimonial accepts the notion that rape and femicide often go hand in hand as they are forms of gender-based violence that, can at times, be inter-reliant (Watson-Krasts 2020:101).

When discussing the various techniques that can be implemented to represent anti-violence attitudes, Wolf (2013a:211) proposes that visionary images need to be produced to truly articulate a "life free of violence". In other words, posters like the one seen in Figures 41 and 42 have the potential to shift societal perceptions of gender-based violence better than mainstream visuals.

However, Dosekun (2007:90) confidently asserts that such a reality is rather unlikely due to the pervasive and systematic nature of rape culture and how it has spawned an unprecedented level of fear among women. Moreover, the trope being visualised here chronicles the traumatic effect on the psyche of women, as their lives are "haunted by the spectre of rape" (Dosekun 2007:90). It can also be argued that depictions of such pleas during a protest are concerned with raising the public consciousness through the use of aesthetic which only serves to amplify the voices of the marginalised (McGarry *et al* 2019:21). Put differently, the protest poster is communicating that there is something amiss with the way that the societal grievances of women are simply dismissed, ultimately leaving them saddled with deep-seated and never-ending feelings of fear.

[18] The popularity of this slogan is most likely linked to the short poem titled "Memoirs of a Slave and Queer Person" written by Koleka Putuma, which brings to light the many injustices of intersectional oppression. Putuma's poem, just one in her collection titled *Collective Amnesia*, reads, "I don't want to die with my hands up and my legs open"(Mpiti 2017:1).

Figure 43: A placard being held by a #TotalShutdown protester, Johannesburg, 2018. Photograph by Nicky Newman. (*Daily Maverick*).

Another similar protest poster used during the #TotalShutdown illustrates the same fearful relationship that exists between women and their male assailants. In Figure 43, we observe a message that reads, "Land of the fear, home of the rapist", which is a reinterpretation of a specific lyric in the American national anthem (also known as The Star-Spangled Banner). In actuality, the correct version of this section in the Star-Spangled Banner is, "Land of the free, home of the brave". One cannot help but notice the irony on full display here when examining how the phrasing has been adapted in this particular poster. The first portion of the lyric seems to suggest that all its citizens live under a banner of personal freedom, while the second part extols those who laid down their lives to preserve that very freedom through acts of courageousness (Bielick *et al* 1998: 21). Essentially, both these elements in the American anthem exhibit traits of national pride. The presence of transatlantic influence also reveals itself here, an observation that was made in relation to the far-reaching nature of #MeToo which originated in the United States.

It is therefore obvious that these same noble qualities are not ascribed to the men of South Africa, or the permissive system that aids in cultivating the culture of fear among women. This form of expression further highlights the longstanding sentiment and trope evident in the

imagery of Figure 43, and equally embodies the 'visual thinking' that takes place in the arena of protest as it relates to the images it spawns (McGarry *et al* 2019:20).

4.6.3 The trope of rape culture

An honest discourse around the scourge of patriarchy, sexual violence and femicide in the country should ideally presuppose that girls, and women, being subjected to these social ills are not the root causes of them. Deeply entrenched biases bolstered by systems of sexism, misogyny, and patriarchal norms have disadvantaged many women. Through an intersectional lens, Black women in poorer communities often shoulder the worst effects of these systems. In addition to these factors, it is well-documented that South Africa continues to grapple with a slew of socioeconomic issues exacerbated by social inequality, poor service delivery as well as state corruption. In many instances, these can serve as triggers within the context of intimate relationships, ultimately leading to violence against women (Sibanda-Moyo *et al* 2017:39). This toxic concoction of sexist, violent norms geared towards men asserting their dominance over women, alongside feeble attempts by government to enact policies that tackle the root of the issue, is at the core of rape culture thriving in South Africa. The term 'rape culture' can be described as a society normalising all spheres of abusive treatment against women, while also being quick to shame those same women and not holding the male perpetrators accountable (Harding 2015:1). Beliefs that stem from rape culture often manifest themselves in the different facets of visual culture and are filtered through a distorted visual lens that promote bigoted, patriarchal practises. Therefore, a lack of nuance in analysing the complexities of gender-based violence, victimisation, and disproportionate power relations between men and women are often embedded in the discourse and representations of violence against women (Wolf 2013a:206). In short, there is a bigger system at play that unfairly disadvantages women; one they have very little control over.

Figure 44: A protester holding up a placard in front of the SAPS, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Anso Thom. (*Daily Maverick*).

Concerning this embedded bias against women that often leaves them largely powerless, Figure 44 shows a female protestor with a poster containing an important observation. The message on the poster reads, "The only thing I'm guilty of is having a vagina." This can then be interpreted as the protestor lamenting the fact that she, along with others like her, is condemned to a life where the threat of gender-based violence is constantly present, simply by virtue of being a woman. It can also be contended that there are inferences of victim-blaming being alluded to in this particular text. Victim-blaming can be viewed as an offshoot of rape culture that seeks to absolve the perpetrator of any wrong-doing once they have committed gender-based violence. Concurrently, this practise aids in the revictimization of those seeking redress for the sexual violence they have endured by making them feel responsible for the crime itself (Oparinde & Matsha 2021:6). Thus, the messaging on this poster is attempting to debunk these patriarchal forms of rationalisations that seek to undermine the agency of women, their right to life, as well as gender inequality. At the same time, this poster indicates the protestor's refusal to shoulder any of the shame that is generally incubated by rape culture (Watson-Krasts 2020:108).

A tactic employed in feminist protest movements that is also alluded to in Figure 44 is one of vagina-related slogans being present on protest signs. The reclamation of words related to the female anatomy as it is represented in the "cultural imagination" is at the core of why such slogans are even coined (Wrenn 2018:5). With specific reference to 2017 women's marches that took place in response to sexually objectifying comments made by president elect Donald Trump, Weber, Dejmanee and Rhode (2018:2300) state that the slogans seen on posters were

framed in a way that did not denigrate women. Rather, slogans such as "Viva la vulva" and "Cunt touch this" were a criticism of Trump's brazen sexism and unproven political competence. Therefore, a rationale that can be offered for why protest tactics like these are worthwhile can be found in the utterances of Krista Suh and Jayna Zweiman (2017:1) who emphasise that "the answer is not to deny our femaleness and femininity, the answer is to demand fair treatment."

Visual tropes addressing the scourge of victim-blaming were similarly applied by the organisers and participants of the original Slut Walk in 2011. Knowing that their actions would be perceived as provocative, they decided to dress in 'revealing' outfits and brandishing protest signs with social commentary about the fruits of rape culture. So, the young feminists attending that particular march were basically confronting the patriarchal values that bled into incidents of sexual violence and harassment, the same way that the protestor in Figure 44 is pictured doing (Carr 2018:24).

In Figures 45 and 46, we observe two more posters displayed at the protest that further counter the argument of rape being an event spurred on by the behaviour of women. By looking at Figure 45, it appears as though the phrase, "Don't get raped" has been penned on the cardboard poster. However, the written message is strikingly peculiar in that it has been edited by striking out the word 'get' as well as the letter 'D' in the original word that read 'raped'. As consequence, the way that the new sentence is intended to be read is, "Don't rape". This simple, yet biting statement juxtaposed with the original sentence, which is in effect being satirised by the updated version, seeks to dismantle the codified misogynistic convention of framing men as frenzied 'monsters' who simply could not control masculine urges (Wolf 2013b:65). Figure 46 further builds on this action of disassembling these misguided norms by concisely demystifying a myth often associated with rape; namely that the woman being raped "asked for it". Sandra Schwark (2017:2) emphasises how such rape myths have long created considerably hostile climates for survivors of rape to exist in. For that reason, this poster (Figure 45) can be interpreted as an indictment on the insensitive and prejudicial lexicon that rape culture has effectively emboldened (Wolf 2013b:69).

Figure 45: A student protestor holding up a sign, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Adriaan Rossouw. (*Medium*).

Figure 46: Marching protestor holding up a poster, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Lesley-Anne Johannes. (*News24*).

4.6.4 The trope of accountability

Figure 47: A male protestor holding up a skateboard with a message written on it, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Arron Moos. (*Arron Nathan*).

During the #AmINext? protest, some of the visuals that were captured seemed to register a deep dissatisfaction not only with violent men in South Africa, but also with government systems dismissed as toothless and leaving women essentially to fend for themselves in the climate of femicide. An expectation of accountability and allyship from these two factions is a familiar theme that reveals itself in these particular images. Once again, the production of such imagery can be said to be rooted in combating a hegemonic visual culture that upholds myth-based and myth-producing narratives that can ultimately allow for societies devoid of any accountability (Wolf 2013a:210).

The trope of male accountability and imploring men to be allies in the fight against gender-based violence is one that appears throughout numerous feminist movements in the country. It is a plea that is linked to an immutable fact when it comes to this violent plague; gender violence is predominantly perpetuated by men and, therefore, their allyship is integral in undoing it. Dahne (2008:36) purports that men's willingness to support efforts to curb the assault on women's right could positively alter greater society's stance on certain harmful

masculinities. In response to such an appeal, Figure 47 illustrates a male protestor at the #AmINext? march answering this call with the declaration, "Womxn don't owe you shit", written on his skateboard. This image documenting his presence and sentiments while at the protest can be decoded in a few ways. One form of interpretation is that the protestor pictured here is empathetic to the plight of his female counterparts and is, thus, demonstrating his support by calling out male entitlement. Secondly, it should be noted that, as long as clear boundaries were set (like not permitting men to co-opt or distract from the movement), this male protestor's participation can be viewed as him acknowledging his own stake in patriarchy and destructive masculinities (Kretschmer & Barber 2016:4). Historically though, there has always been a lingering sentiment in certain sects of feminism that strongly advocate for strict autonomy in relation to men and their presence in women's movements (Coote & Campbell 1987:8).

Furthermore, the use of the intersectional term 'womxn' in the protest sign implies that the male attendee is at least cognisant of the need for inclusivity in our everyday lexicon in combating strictly binary understandings of gender. With reference to the importance of men grasping the concept of intersectionality, Edstrom *et al* (2016:58) make the contention that systems of patriarchal privilege and oppression flourish in societies where intersecting social injustices and gender inequality are not proactively tackled by women, as well as men. To conclude, the above visual components represent how male allyship should ideally manifest itself within the framework of female-led movements.

The poster in Figure 48 alludes to a trope commonly depicted in films; namely the 'nice guy' trope. Usually located within the context of a romantic comedy, Rose Younglove (2020) explains that unlike a genuinely well-intentioned person, a 'nice guy' harbours the belief that the most basic forms of social decency can be leveraged as currency for sex. Put differently, those men who exemplify this trope, for all intents and purposes, still subscribe to misogynistic and patriarchal ideologies, even if they may not exhibit hyper-masculine traits. Therefore, this poster seemingly denounces the relatively empty platitudes of so-called 'nice guys' whose gestures of goodwill do not extend to calling out their fellow men. In her article titled *Movies Killed the Nice Guy in 2018. Good Riddance,* Rebecca Pahle (2018) revels in the fact that even the film industry has begun to recognise the inherent misogyny behind characters who portray this trope. In view of Pahle's assertion, Figure 48 can be said to demonstrate a similar awareness amongst women, exposing quasi 'good men' who do very little in the way of dismantling the patriarchy they often benefit from.

Figure 48: A placard being held up outside Parliament, Cape Town, 2019. Photographer unknown. (*The South African*).

Figure 49: A SAPS officer holding a protest placard, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Anso Thom. (*Daily Maverick*).

In continuing with this trope, Figure 49 illustrates a placard with the statement, "Time for men to take their own trash out" which could potentially relate to the advocating of greater accountability among men themselves. Another striking element present in the photograph is the emphasis of the word 'trash' which is notably underlined in the text. The protestor could potentially be calling back to the #MenAreTrash online movement of 2017. As previously discussed, the hashtag was comprised of mostly female Twitter users berating the thriving culture of misogyny, sexism and sexual violence they perpetually witness. The hashtag-centred discourse also prompted the so-called 'good men' of the nation to intervene against these problematic and gendered behaviours within their own male peer groups; which is undoubtedly an apt sentiment in the context of the #AmINext? protest and its tropes (Makama *et al* 2019:2).

Since femicide and other forms of GBV predominantly emanate from men, this is essentially a call for them to be allies and dismantle all forms of destructive patriarchy. This is especially pertinent in the face of faltering government interventions and political will (Sibanda-Moyo *et al* 2017:11). Moreover, this image speaks to the idea that male involvement and allyship within causes advanced by feminist activists offer a platform for men to listen and critically examine their male privilege and patriarchy, in the hopes that they impart this understanding onto their male peers (Dahne 2008:36). The arguments of Fasnacht (2021:225) substantiate the above notions as they also emphasise that protest messages should aim to influence the discourse around key societal problems by putting pressure on the status quo. This ought to be done, she says, through the strict outlining of newly set boundaries that signal a disobedience of and divergence from socially accepted practices that pose harm to marginalised groups (Fasnacht 2021:226). With the messaging present in the placard in Figure 49, it is evident that there is an expectation being laid out by the protestors representing the plight of women. The expectation here is that the violent behaviour of men should be changed and called out by their own, a convention that is unfortunately not witnessed enough in society.

In terms of the protest gestures that occurred during the #AmINext? march, there was one in particular that revealed certain myths about protest spaces (which can also be seen in Figure 49). As previously stated, those engaged in public protest action have historically had a tumultuous relationship with the law enforcement tasked with managing demonstrations. This fractured co-existence is likely spurred on by what Bruce (2012:6) terms a "doctrine of maximum force" that is embraced within the ranks of the SAPS. Therefore, reports of police brutality are far from being a novelty in South Africa. However, in Figure 49 we see a South African police officer behind a protest placard he is holding up. The message being signified by this image is two-pronged in this instance. In essence, the gesture of the officer agreeing to hold the poster can be seen to be a form of allyship from the perspective of him being a man, while also an olive branch that is being extended to the protestor from the perspective of him being a police officer as well. Although this is a temporary encounter, it is a significant one as an often-held protest myth is somewhat subverted here. Furthermore, in unpacking a bio-political encounter such as the one displayed here, Butler (2020:24) states that although this is a passive means of resistance, "it is a deliberate way of exposing the body to police power, of entering the field of violence, and of exercising an adamant and embodied form of political agency."

Responses to the systematic failures of the justice system are on full display in Figures 50 and 51. These images demonstrate the sentiment of women who are dejected by the mishandling of the scourge of violence against women. Figure 50 in particular directly calls out those entrusted to convict perpetrators of femicide and sexual violence: the government. In relation to the regulatory powers of governments, Mbembe poses the question:

> Imagine politics as a form of war, we must ask: What place is given to life, death, and the human body (in particular the wounded or slain body)? How are they inscribed in the order of power? (2003:12).

When applied to the social quagmire of femicide, this line of inquiry seems to infer that bodies, particularly those of women, are at risk of being disregarded or made invisible if hegemonic power structures are exclusionary of marginalised voices (Fuentes 2016:61). Therefore, the sentiment expressed in a statement like "Government has failed us" most likely emanates from a sense of discontent on the ground that is continually discounted by established institutions of power.

Moving onto Figure 51, the themes explored in this image appear to relate to castration as a form of justice meted out to perpetrators of rape. The image on the poster illustrates a man with both his arms and leg restrained, visibly in a state of hysteria as he is about to be castrated by means of a guillotine. Written atop this illustration is the slogan, "Consequence For Rape. Emancipate & Castrate", indicating that the man being punished is actually a rapist. In the context of the #AmINext? protest, such imagery alludes to some women viewing castration as a viable means of punishment for violent sexual offenders. However, this is by no means a novel sentence as the discourse around the death penalty and castration for convicted rapists and child molesters has a sprawling history across the world (Goswami 2014:70).

Rose (2016:24) has also contended that although it is not a frequent occurrence in visual mediums such as films, fantasies centred on the masculine fear of castration can be located in cinema. She further expands on this idea by theorising that these fantasy depictions are most likely a response to the imbalanced power dynamics in the way the sexuality of men and women is represented onscreen. In probing why such a portrayal would reveal itself at this particular protest, one only needs to grasp the degree to which the culture of rape and femicide has ravaged South Africa. Therefore, it is plausible to deduce that this culture in conjunction with an inadequate criminal justice incapable of sufficiently trying rape cases is at the core of this protest gesture (Basdeo 2019: 118).

Figure 50: Protestor with a sign at the #AmINext? march, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Ashraf Hendricks. (*Al Jazeera*).

Figure 51: Protestors displaying poster with an illustration, Cape Town, 2019. Photographer unknown. (*Twitter*).

4.7 The use of flowers as symbol of remembrance

One other protest gesture visible in some of the images captured during the march is that of posters and flowers being used to adorn the fence of Parliament. This is obviously a symbolic

gesture meant to signify something to both the viewer and those in positions of leadership within the relevant state institutions. Awad and Wagoner (2020:100) claim that, in the name of social change, protest symbols can be created, adopted, and adapted by a wide range of cultures, and these symbols can endure even after the protest is over. In the case of flowers, not only do they symbolise peace, beauty and life, but in the context of protest, history has also revealed them to be associated with acts of defiance and dissent (Pergament 2017).

In Figure 52 we observe a protestor by the name of Jan Rose Kasmir, standing in front of some soldiers while holding a flower. This is symbolic in the sense that she is peacefully protesting against the Vietnam war that the United States was engaged in. However, in the image it is evident that her peace-bearing gesture is met with an antithetical one as the soldiers are seen wielding military-style weaponry (Riboud 1989). An interpretation such as this can also be applied to the gesture made by the #AmINext? protestors (Figure 53). In contrast with the male-sponsored, and state-enabled brutality they endure at the hands of men, the women protesting have chosen to do so with an act of peace, and one that also symbolises the beauty present in life and living things.

Figure 52: An anti-Vietnam war protestor confronting United States soldiers while holding a flower, Virginia, 1967. Photograph by Marc Riboud. (*Magnum Photos*).

In addition, it is the assertion of Huss *et al* (2017:150) that the displaying of flowers in an event space makes the interactions that occur there more meaningful, and often symbolise a positive connection between those who are present. Flowers being displayed in remembrance can be said also to reflect the theme of collective grief amongst women. And the grief experienced

was plentiful as numerous other young South African women were also killed both in the days before and after Uyinene's murder gripped the nation (Lyster 2019). As these spates of femicide have become commonplace in the country at this point, the protestors choosing to grieve in this manner is not unexpected. When explaining the significance of such a gesture taking place in a public space, Prechtel says,

> Grief expressed out loud, whether in or out of character, unchoreographed and honest, for someone we have lost, or a country or home we have lost, is in itself the greatest praise we could ever give them. Grief is praise, because it is the natural way love honors what it misses (2015:31).

And so, when dissecting Figures 53 and 54 in conjunction with the other gestures, symbols and visual implements photographed at the march to Parliament, it becomes easier to comprehend what the protest goers were attempting to achieve. Ultimately, the picture of the flowers being arranged on the fence can be viewed as a gesture that memorialises the life of Uyinene Mrwetyana, and also highlights the degree to which her death awakened and connected a grieving nation.

Figure 53: An arrangement of flowers and protest posters placed against the fence of Parliament, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Henk Kruger. (*The Independent*).

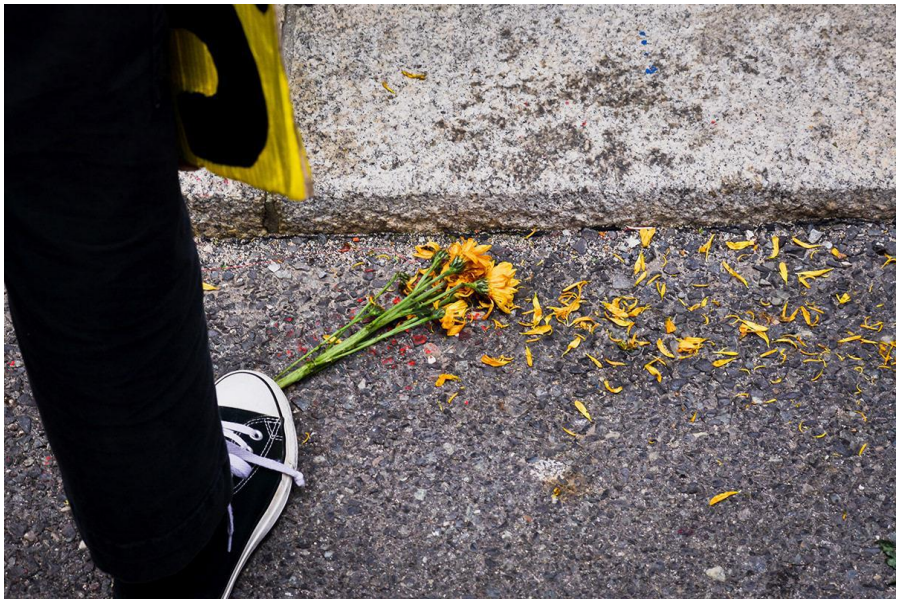

Figure 54: A protestor standing with flowers at their feet, Cape Town, 2019. Photograph by Arron Moos. (*Arron Nathan*).

4.8 Intertextuality in South African female-led protests

Some of the protest gestures exhibited during the #AmINext? march at Parliament in Cape Town, as well as the sentiments they convey, serve as a reminder that the fight for gender equality is still an ongoing one. The women who expressed their dissatisfaction with the status quo of male dominance and gender-based violence in the mid to late 2010s undoubtedly possessed the same rebellious spirit of their predecessors who marched in 1956. Thus, a series of through lines between these eras of protest can be identified and dissected.

Firstly, it should be highlighted that the images captured at contemporary female-led protests seem to be imbued with several tenets of resistance photography, which was explored in the second chapter. Krantz (2008:6) asserts that the apartheid state's repressive and propagandist media tactics necessitated a style of photography that would ultimately counter the skewed narrative being perpetuated by the government of the time. In essence, a more truthful lens was being offered to those seeking the truth about the repressive regime and what it was truly doing to its Black population. The visuals that came to preserve the struggles of the women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956 similarly shone a light on an historic event that would most likely have been supressed, had it not been for the fortitude of the women in attendance. Likewise, the imagery from female protest movements spawned by the hashtags #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMust, and #AmINext? meant that the protestors could broadcast

alternative and often marginalised narratives (Mutsvairo 2016:10). These were narratives they could call their own, geared towards unveiling patriarchal structures that sustain femicide and violence against women.

Moreover, there is something to be said about the similar arenas in which some of these protest events occurred. As discussed in earlier chapters, protests being staged in or near physical spaces associated with established power structures can add validity to their bio-political nature (Butler 2011:4). Therefore, the 1956 women's marchers occupying in the confines of the Union Buildings, and the hordes of #AmINext? protestors assembling outside Parliament in Cape Town should not be recorded as an inconsequential happening. On the contrary, these similarities further highlight the intertextuality between the various forms of resistance that have been uncovered during the female-led protests that have happened throughout South Africa's history.

Other visual parallels that are identifiable are ones that specifically exist between the Fallist movements and the protest that was staged in relation to #AmINext?. For instance, when observing the #AmINext? march, and the posters decrying rape culture in the country, the conformity becomes evident when compared to certain protest gestures that sought to condemn a prevailing culture of rape on university campuses (Orth, van Wyk & Andipatin 2020:192). The intertextual nature of these protest movements is further bolstered by how the protest imagery that was captured underscored a reclaiming of bodily autonomy and reframing of victimisation. In the case of the Fallist period, when female student protestors participated in naked protests as a way of highlighting agency over their own bodies, the intention behind this act was to shift the power from their male counterparts. In the same vein, protest posters seen at the #AmINext? march in Cape Town demanded justice and accountability in a display of agency that sought to dispel one-dimensional depictions of victimhood. Wolf (2013a:210) suggests that these types of representations are crucial in shifting the problematic, socially gendered narrative of women being perpetually viewed as victims of masculine domination. Instead, there should be a concerted effort to highlight women as agents of their own image, even in the face of patriarchal cultures and norms. These more contemporary protests are, therefore, congruent with this philosophy.

It should also be noted that a visible trope that is identifiable in #AmINext? as well as the Women's March of 1956 is one of peaceful protest. In other words, the captured images indicate that a nonviolent approach was adopted by both the marchers and law enforcement at

the protests in question. Lancaster (2018:32) simply defines a peaceful protest as a crowd gathering without any kind of violent police intervention being necessary. Moreover, the fact that these two protests in particular are some of the more significant ones in the South African context when it comes to woman-led mobilisation is striking, considering how they lean towards a stance of nonviolence. Perhaps their prominence is correlated to the theory that women being on the frontlines of mass protest in a peaceful manner, often leads to positive gains in terms of their rights and freedoms being acknowledged and protected within a democracy (Marks & Chenoweth 2020:5).

This interplay between these movements even extends past South African shores as there were several international protests that were staged in solidarity with the women of this country. One such protest involved over 200 women gathered in New York City, marching under the banner of #AmINext?, to mourn the loss of Uyinene Mrwetyana after her story reverberated throughout the globe (Head 2019). Figure 55 illustrates how many of the same tropes related to accountability and rape culture are addressed in the posters being displayed by the female protestors. Specifically, one of the signs reads, “Men need basic home training” which could be an allusion to the fact that the onus is on men to treat their female counterparts with a greater degree of respect and dignity. This sense of accountability is further demonstrated through the sign which reads, “Senzeni na? What did we do?”, a slogan referencing a struggle song that was an integral part of the Fallist movements as well (Xulu 2018:5). This song lyric is once again centered around the role that men play in violence against women and how victim-blaming is central to maintaining a status quo that perpetually disadvantages South African women.

Figure 55: Gender-based violence protest staged in New York City, New York, 2019. Photograph by The South African. (*The South African*).

4.9 Conclusion

South Africa has witnessed a wave of female-driven protests in recent years, whether that be on online platforms or in the streets. These movements indisputably represent a collective sentiment among women that is alerting men, and society at large, that the scourge of sexism, misogyny and all iterations of gender-based violence are unacceptable. There have been previous protest movements dealing with these societal issues that ultimately culminated in the #AmINext? protests of 2019. Moreover, the #AmINext? movement, in its entirety, has proven to be a seminal piece of women's history in the country. The reason for this assertion has to do with the kaleidoscope of protest imagery and messaging that was on display on that particular day. This imagery is underscored by an assortment of tropes and symbols that highlight the horrifying nature of femicide and GBV in South Africa. The slogans plastered on many of the protest posters discussed throughout the chapter offer commentary on patriarchal violence women are jaded with. Rape culture, victim-blaming, and a systematic lack of accountability from men and the structures that protect them, these are but a few of the important themes that come together through the visual. Even more noteworthy, is the perceivable intertextuality

between this particular mass demonstration led by the female attendees, and those that have transpired in both recent memory and in the midst of South Africa's apartheid regime.

More than anything, these tropes and motifs offer sombre commentary on how women view the state of gender relations, and the fight against sexual violence and patriarchy – a fight that our society is seemingly struggling with.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Chapters

With the aim of setting up the overarching framework of the study, Chapter 1 outlines the scholastic intricacies that went into the research. The text in this chapter was primarily concerned with establishing the inner workings of protest movements, along with the visuals that accompany them. A comprehensive review of the literature was also provided so as to introduce the foremost theories on topics and themes related to the various forms of activism that have been conceived due to feminist exploits, the roots and significance of intersectionality, body-politics in the context of public protests, and lastly, the many functions and versions of protest imagery.

Chapter 2 essentially posited that although probing the visuals related to #AmINext? is a crucial undertaking, this endeavour would be enriched through contexualising the country's expansive history with protest action. The 1956 Women's March to the Union Building was a focal point of this chapter, however, before unpacking the significance of that particular demonstration, the concept of struggle or resistance photography was introduced first. Therefore, the chapter began with the seminal writings of David Krantz (2008:6) who highlights the political nature of resistance photography and how it was rooted in the context of South Africa's apartheid regime. Chapter 2 then introduced the Afrapix Collective; a group of dedicated photographers who achieved significant political feats and were charged with conscientising the global community about the repressive government of the time using the images they captured. A great deal of this section also drew attention to the scores of prominent photographers (not only from the Afrapix Collective) and what various messaging and contributions can be derived from their photography-based vocation.

As we got further into the chapter, a more nuanced take on the idea of resistance photography and its effects was developed. The research being unpacked showed that those who could be considered pivotal proponents of this art form did not necessarily view it through a shared, monolithic perspective. At this point, a case study of Santu Mofokeng's works was delineated and then expounded upon. As explained in Chapter 2, during the height of apartheid and the racial tyranny it sanctioned on the Black masses, resistance photography was a highly prevalent

form of protest and activism in the country. Being a Black photographer and an integral member of Afrapix, Mofokeng revealed some of the more contentious practices associated with this form of photography. To start with, he had grievances with how the standards promoted in resistance photography consequently meant that the beauty of 'everyday life' was simply glossed over by those documenting the brutality of apartheid. This led to the other shortcomings of resistance photography illustrated in the chapter as, according to Mofokeng (1999:26), there was also an economic element driving the heavy emphasis on the grimmer cruelty being exacted on the Black population. In light of this argument, Chapter 2 then unpacked the alternate tropes present in some images captured by the likes of Mofokeng himself, as well as Peter Magubane. These tropes relate to the dignity, humanity, and defiant spirit of the female subjects, rather than placing a strong emphasis on themes of anguish and brutality.

Towards the end of the chapter, the 1956 Women's March was described in terms of what it represented in the context of South Africa, as well as how the images that were captured in the midst of the demonstration can be interpreted. Moreover, there was a strong emphasis on certain tropes that appear in numerous protest images. Tropes of unity, solidarity, and defiance were dominant features throughout this analysis. Finally, in an effort to reinforce the importance of the 1956 march, artworks memorialising the events of that fateful day were also unpacked in the chapter (art works crafted by the Medu Art Ensemble to be more specific). By the end of the analysis in this chapter, deeper context in terms of the significance of South African female-led protest was offered, which ultimately added to the overall research topic.

Over the course of Chapter 3, both the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall student protests were analysed using some of the protest images that appeared throughout social media and more traditional forms of broadcasting. The literature of Bruce Mutsvairo and Tanja Bosch (2017:78-80) was repeatedly referenced throughout this section as it delved into the key components of online activism in the South African context. This was a noteworthy inclusion due to the respective movements' heavy reliance on virtual spaces that helped in amplifying their efforts. Chapter 3 then underscored the nature and origins of the protests themselves as well as the internal discord that subsequently played out along gendered lines.

Later on, the tense predicament many female students, along with those belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, found themselves in as they were protesting alongside their male counterparts who often exhibited toxic traits of male dominance and patriarchy was illustrated with various imagery. Through the unpacking of some visuals documenting these moments of

infighting, and the reactions they spawned from the female and queer student body, the chapter was able to offer insights on intersectional feminism on university campuses countrywide. Next, imagery depicting naked protests as a means of resistance and a retaliatory tool was a vital feature of Chapter 3, with the research of Sandra Young (2020) and Sylvia Tamale (2019) serving as key literature sources in this regard. In short, this part of the dissertation visually grappled with the wide-ranging protest actions women felt compelled to undertake in response to the patriarchal structures they had to contend with.

To set the stage for the visual analysis of the #AmINext? march, Chapter 4 began by examining the foundations of visual representations of violence against women. A strong emphasis was placed on South African art that tackles the subject of gender-based violence, namely the works of Diane Victor and Gabrielle Goliath. Goliath's work in particular was likened to feminist protest marches through the ways in which it is staged.

Later on, activism related to the #MeToo, #BringBackOurGirls, and SlutWalks was briefly unpacked to indicate the paradigm shift that has occurred in feminism due to advancements in technology together with social networking sites. Using South Africa as its framework, the chapter then analysed some key online movements that preceded, and somewhat informed #AmINext?. In their own respective ways, Giaxoglou (2021:3) and Stewart and Schultze (2019:1) argued that images propagated through online movements and hashtags can function as effective mobilisation tools. Moreover, notions of female solidarity and collective identities in relation to #AmINext? social media posts were also explained throughout this part of the chapter.

Chapter 4 also chronicled and studied the fallout of Uyinene Mrwetyana's brutal murder and how the reaction of women in South Africa permeated across virtual platforms as well as in the physical sense. The various writings of Judith Butler were cited extensively in relation to theories around body-politics and the act of protesting. One of the main assertions of Butler (2011:2) underscored over the course of this chapter was that bio-political protest taking place in the streets is a constructive exercise that can disrupt unjust societal norms. Theorists such as Hannah Arendt and Hester Baer were referenced as a means of substantiating the arguments made by Butler.

Once the importance of body politics was established, the chapter then veered into academic territory more concerned with visually analysing the #AmINext? march. Images captured during the protest were discussed at length, with the central arguments relating to the symbols,

gestures, tropes, and protest devices that can be located in visuals. When debating the validity of visual implements such as signs and placards being used during demonstrations, Philipps (2012:6) is adamant that the messaging behind illustrations and slogans can bolster the efforts of protest groups. This assertion was then supported by a variety of examples where the tropes found in the protest imagery of #AmINext? were analysed. Additionally, a robust discourse around sexual violence, femicide, male allyship, and certain protest myths was contended as this section of the chapter comes to an end. Chapter 4 sought to demonstrate the intertextuality that exists between images captured during some of the more prominent female-led protests in South Africa's history. Through this analysis, it became even clearer that several linkages can be identified when contrasting these protest images.

5.2 Contribution of study

Veneti (2017:2) emphasises the crucial role research interrogating the visual components of social movements plays in stimulating necessary public discourse. With this sentiment in mind, it is my belief that the study I have presented here aids in this endeavour. Exhaustive exploration around the events of #AmINext?, in terms of both its online and physical manifestations, is still largely untapped. This is a deficiency my work sought to remedy. Likewise, an in-depth visual analysis of the #AmINext? march seems to be a valid and relevant contribution; not only in the context of visual studies, but also in the broader conversations that address misogynistic, patriarchal, and violent systems against women in South Africa.

With specific reference to the visual analysis that was offered in this dissertation, a more expansive framework was produced as it pertains to South Africa and its connection with women's movements. The study extensively documented the 1956 Women's March, the intersectional nature of feminist protest action during #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, as well as the visual tropes and symbols of #AmINext?. Mahlori, Byrne, and Mabude (2018:3) assert that with more instances of GBV being exposed at institutions of higher learning, academic communities cannot afford to shy away from the discourse sparked by movements such as #AmINext?, particularly because student mobilisation is often the catalyst for female-led protests that have been observed in recent times. As a consequence, this study can be viewed as a contribution in the greater context of visual and cultural studies.

When considered in unison, the chapters of the above dissertation pointed to the poignant reality of women and their lived experiences as they contend with various forms of patriarchy, sexism, and sexual violence. From imagery capturing the women of 1956 in the Union

Buildings, to the more contemporary visuals of thousands of disgruntled citizens marching outside of Parliament, it is abundantly evident that those who face marginalisation due to the status quo will always find ways to disrupt it. In the same way, it is my hope that visual studies research such as this dissertation can serve as a supplementary conduit to feminist protest, while also educating prospective male allies about the key dynamics that accompany this form of activism.

5.3 Limitations of study

The most glaring limitation regarding the scope of potential research was the fact that the #AmINext? movement and march to Parliament only transpired in 2019. Consequently, a scant amount of academic literature dissecting the particular event currently exists. These limitations were even more pronounced when seeking out any form of detailed visual analysis on this subject. A paper titled *#SAShutdown & #AmINext* written by Sara Morshedi (2020) was briefly referenced in the fourth chapter as it contains some engaging insights about the inner workings of the 2019 protest. However, the analysis it provided does not venture into the visual, making it a source that does not fully satisfy the needs of this thesis.

Another restrictive element that hindered the overall process was the lack of diverse visual research concerning feminist protests in the contemporary South African context. Although, it should be stated that this dissertation referenced Kylie Thomas (2020) and Deneesher Pather (2018), who certainly produced compelling analyses in this regard. Fortunately, international sources examining the same sphere of study were relatively more accessible which allowed for a foundation to be laid in relation to analysing the visual components of a protest. This literature was subsequently used in my study which was delimited to a semiotic and hermeneutic examination of selected protest images.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

As the research conducted for this dissertation primarily focussed on and probed the social media images and photo essays linked to #AmINext, a further content analysis of how more traditional forms of media framed the murder of Mrwetyana might lead to the study being slightly better-rounded. Something else that could be included in further research is unpacking how hashtag activism in South Africa has evolved in the years since Mrwetyana's killing. In essence, the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence continues to persist in our society, meaning the online discourse and the visuals associated with it do as well. Lastly, I believe

there is still more room to investigate additional visual elements that presented themselves in the imagery of GBV protests akin to #AmINext? that subsequently took place in other parts of the country as well. For instance, another protest denouncing GBV and femicide was staged outside the very same gates of Cape Town's Parliament on 26 April 2021. A similar demonstration was held by predominantly female marchers in Durban outside the Office of The Premier on the same day. In both cases there were many protest signs and gestures on display that could potentially offer even more insights through future analysis.

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