

STATE OF THE ART

EMBODIED BLACK RAGE

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Abstract

Examining two sets of archived materials that include a corpus of narratives that reflect on the period of apartheid in South Africa and posters used by anti-apartheid activists, the paper teases out the operations of racism and the manifestations of rage on the Black body. Critical discourse analysis and affect as theory and method are applied to trace the work of racism and its affective consequences and resistances. Here affect is deployed to read the terrain of the corporeal and the discursive. Black rage is seen as a response to White supremacy and it has the following outcomes: it can have destructive consequences, can enable psychological release of pent up anger, and can simultaneously be an expression of self-love.

Keywords: Apartheid Archive Project, Affect, Black Rage, Black Bodies, Embodied Rage, Narrative, Posters, Self-love

INTRODUCTION: BURNING RAGE

In this paper, I attempt to read archival materials including narratives and anti-apartheid posters in particular, to reflect on apartheid-era racism.¹ These archival materials channel Black rage and render it discursively legible. Rage is a tool that was used by anti-apartheid activists and I therefore seek to recenter the concept as an analytical lens. The literature sections of this paper are analytically anchored in the concept of Black rage. Consequently, the first section explicates my understanding of Black rage in the South African context. This section is followed by a theoretical exposition which sees rage as generative and an expression of Black self-love. The final part illustrates the relationship between Black rage and affect in order to undertake a corporeal and discursive reading of rage. In order to trace the lineages of rage between apartheid-era South Africa and the contradictions of neoliberal democratization in the post-apartheid period, I begin in the present. On March 20, 2012 many South Africans were appalled to see news images of a burning library in the impoverished town of Ratanda on the outskirts of Heidelberg in Gauteng. It seems that while some were understanding of the rage demonstrated during what has come to be known as “service delivery protests,”

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burning a community library appeared to be taking the notion of protest too far. Television and newspaper coverage might have given the Ratanda incident more visibility, but Peter Lor (2013) contends that at least fifteen libraries have been set alight and burned in South African townships since 2005. He notes that the libraries have been burned by some of the same people that they are meant to service. Here, I posit that in explaining the actions of protestors one must take into account the legitimacy of the anger and burning rage of mostly young unemployed men.

Through the example of the protests of the residents of Kennedy Road on the outskirts of Durban, South Africa, Kerry Chance (2011) has illustrated that the symbolic power of fire is the progeny of apartheid-era forms of expression. Jacob Dlamini (2014) has shown how the special branch police of the apartheid state burned the bodies of Black anti-apartheid activists. While leading the anti-apartheid struggle in the streets, Winnie Madikizela Mandela (1986) stated: “Together, hand in hand, with our boxes of matches...we shall liberate this country.” Seen as both productive and dangerous, I argue that rage is the underlying feature of the destructive and liberating power of fire. Lighting up institutions of value to a developmental state (Presidency 2014) such as libraries and schools, is a demonstration of the subversive power of the disempowered. For them, a library servicing an area without jobs, food, unaffordable electricity and water, is useless. In South Africa, where the education promised by schools and libraries is commoditized to signify the promise of the end of poverty, these schools and libraries have not lived up to their promise. Understood together with the long history of education-related protests in South Africa (South African History Archive 2015), schools continue to serve as lightning rods for the burning rage of disgruntled protestors. If one follows James Baldwin’s (1963) promise of “the fire next time” it is useful to consider the rage of township youth as the fire *this* time—in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa.

BLACK RAGE

Greg Nicolson, a *Daily Maverick* journalist that covered the March 2012 Ratanda protests remarks on the visual presentation of the protestors. He describes them as primarily young men that were often bare-chested with their t-shirts around their heads who screamed when charging at their targets with bricks and bottles. This moment of Black threat and violence signified by the young male protestors illuminates the failure of the neoliberal democratization project that leaves poor Blacks on the margins of electoral democracy (Ndetyana 2014). For Achille Mbembe, in post-apartheid South Africa, welfare and consumption are the “two main technologies of social discipline, if not pacification, that the government is using after the years of mobilization to demobilize people—it doesn’t want people to be protesting too much” (2010, p. 662). The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) mobilization of Black people against oppressive conditions remains important in contemporary South Africa. It was born out of the recognition of the importance Black solidarity against White supremacy (More 2014). The visual embodiment of the rage of young Black people affectively conveys their potency and the solidarity that is the hallmark of Black rage (McCann 2013). Kopano Ratele (2013) reminds us that Black men in particular live tenuous lives and constitute by far the highest rates of deaths through homicides. Reporting on violence in the 1990’s, B. Hamber (1999) noted that poor people were almost eighty times more likely to be killed or be injured by crime than their well-off counterparts. The continuities between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa are marked by the deaths of Black bodies: Albert Luthuli, Solomon Mahlangu, the women, men and

children killed in Sharpeville massacre, Steve Biko, Chris Hani, Andries Tatane, the Marikana miners, and many others. Black rage within the South African context finds fertile ground in the brutality of state repression. Similarly, in the North American context, state sponsored repression of Black bodies resulted in a fermenting rage which, in his writing about the Jim Crow period, James Baldwin described as follows:

...there is, ...no Negro living in America who has not felt, briefly or for long periods, with anguish sharp or dull, in varying degrees to varying effect, simple, naked and unanswerable hatred; who has not wanted to smash any White face he may encounter in a day, to violate, out of motives of the cruellest vengeance, their women, to break the bodies of all White people and to bring them low, as low as that dust into which he himself has been and is being trampled... (Baldwin 1970, p. 30).

This impulse to violence described by James Baldwin is an echo of Frantz Fanon's (1963) analysis of the decolonization of Africa and the centrality of violence in this process. He describes the antidote to colonial violence as follows: "From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called into question by absolute violence" (Fanon 1963, p. 29). Indeed, the question of violence and liberation has preoccupied African scholarship for some time. Thus, Steve Biko (2004) and Chabani Manganyi (1973) saw the psychological assault on the Black body as necessitating bodily resistance. Writing in the aftermath of 9/11, Mahmood Mamdani (2002) has argued that "whatever we think about their methods, terrorists have a cause, and need to be heard" (p. 773). In this instance, Mamdani is pointing to the cause of rage among those constructed as bad Muslims. Reflecting on Rwanda, Mamdani (2001) has written about the underlying logic which informs the process of victims becoming killers. He advocates a deep awareness of history and remedial action so as to prevent cycles of violence.

I now turn to American scholarship to illustrate the transnational study of Black rage and its usefulness in analyzing the South African context that is both similar and different to the United States. Similarities include histories of enforced race-based segregation and denial of opportunity for Black people. The two contexts are different in part because Black people are the majority population in South Africa, but they form a minority in the United States. The concept of Black rage has a long history (Sneirson 1995), and it famously received scholarly attention from psychiatrists Williams Grier and Price Cobbs (1968). They stated:

For his own survival, then, he [the Black person] develops a cultural paranoia in which every White man is a potential enemy unless proved otherwise and every social system is set against him unless he personally finds out differently (1968, p. 159).

They contend that without this paranoia, recurring racial infringements fuel a resentment that can cause rage. I contend, however, that the word suspicion is more appropriate in this context as the word paranoia bears pathological connotations.

Reviewing Black rage within the North American legal landscape and the critical race theory paradigm, Tosha Foster states that there is "increasing understanding and acceptance within the psychological community of the psychology of Blacks and the ways in which mental illness may be triggered in, and affect, Blacks in different ways than the rest of society" (1997, p. 1868–69). She argues that Black rage should not be seen as insanity, but rather as a mitigating factor for insanity pleas in the legal system.

Insanity individualizes and pathologizes what is essentially a social and structural problem of White racism. When Black rage is characterized as a psychological pathology, it erroneously necessitates individual treatment. This approach is incorrect because an effective intervention requires overcoming White supremacy and its operation through neoliberalism. This is to say that even where Black political elites are prominent, their participation in the superstructure of neoliberal capital accumulation does not undo the destructive effects of Whiteness. Individual treatment promotes an approach that bandages the symptoms and leaves the systemic cause intact.

bell hooks (1995) is critical of the ways in which Black rage has been individualised and thus depoliticised by the American media and legal fraternity. hooks asserts that “White supremacist capitalist patriarchy” would rather pathologize all Black rage, “than identify the structure wherein the rage surfaces” (1995, p. 29). Black rage can be expressed pathologically but it can also lead to constructive empowerment. For example, South Africa’s defiance campaigns and the activities of the BCM led to constructive empowerment (More 2009, 2014). More recent students’ movements such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall have exhibited Black rage, which has confounded some observers that saw apartheid excesses as long over. Solidarity between students across university campuses has been enabled by Black rage. hooks however contends that “Bourgeois whites, like their Black counterparts, do not want rage to take the form of strategic resistance. Hence their mutual investment is in mocking and trivializing Black rage” (1995, p. 30). In South Africa, the so-called “poo protests” have seen desperate Black people demonstrating by bringing human excrement into elite spaces. hooks warns that the greater danger is White supremacy rather than Black rage. Similarly, for Biko (2004) the problem was Whiteness and he advocated for White liberals to work with their fellow Whites to reverse apartheid instead of seeking to lead or police Black resistance.²

While legal scholars such as Foster (1997) and Judd Sneirson (1995) link Black rage to Black aggression towards White people, I argue for a sedimented conception of White oppression that I define as a psychic memory developed over a long period of colonization, apartheid, and indirect neoliberal forms of oppression. This is to suggest that oppression can be transmitted intergenerationally where later generations unconsciously “own” the experiences of their forebears (Freeman 2013). Writing about countries with historic wounds including South Africa, Ellis Cose (2005) notes that if history’s wounds are left unattended, they can fester for generations. He points out that time does not heal all wounds. Importantly, Cose (2005) posits that memories and anger can linger long beyond a human lifespan. This is important insight for understanding the rage of those that were born after the demise of formal apartheid. This inheritance can of course also occur in the material realm where the legacy of poverty is passed on between generations. Here it is important to point out that I do not conceive of rage as transhistorical, unchanging, and universal. History and context is crucial for the drivers, timing and forms of rage. Unlike in the United States, on the African continent, Whites constitute numerical minorities and are largely absent from the places where working class Black people enact their rage. This is not to suggest that Blacks only protest in the Townships. Protests in elite spaces are deliberate and involve mass transportation to exclusive areas. The anti-apartheid movement famously protested in elite spaces such as beaches and city centers. However, where Black rage occurs in the Township, it might be seen in the destruction of communal property purportedly belonging to Black people. The Marikana massacre stands as a stark reminder of what might occur when rage is turned inwards. Baldwin (1949) and Ralph Ellison’s (1995) understanding of Black rage in the avalanche of violence against downtown Harlem property is instructive. The rage is unleashed towards accessible

property that is seen as an extension of the repressive state. Foster's account of the development of Black rage remains useful:

The brutalized Black person, seeing and experiencing daily the historical and perpetual ill-treatment of Blacks and perceiving that Blacks are akin to an endangered species, develops a coping mechanism centered around paranoia (1997, p. 1871).

In addition to the defensive attributes of Black rage, the affective component of Black rage can lead to a shared affect where rage travels between surfaces and is shared across settings (Anderson 2009). Taryn Jordan (2014) notes that in spaces of protest, oppressed people generate a shared affective energy based on a common desire for liberation. Here Jordan challenges the reductive view of mob mentality and suggests an affirming oneness of intense shared emotional energy that is underpinned by a yearning for freedom. Depending on the context, Black rage exhibits characteristics of situated solidarity between Black bodies in spaces of protest. Thus, in the example of the Ratanda protests outlined earlier, we see the shared affective energy between the bodies of Black protestors. This is apparent in the advancing and menacing bare-chested bodies observed by Greg Nicolson (2012).

Following advocates of the concept of Black rage, Sneirson states that "the Black rage phenomenon does not discriminate by class" (1995, p. 2257). Cose (1993) illustrates the growth of rage among the African American middle class after material success is obtained at a huge cost to their psychic well-being. The wounds of racism do not abate when Black people transition to the middle classes. Indeed, there is a body of research that illustrates the continuities in experiences between social classes. For example, in South Africa, Geoffrey Modisha (2007) has described the liminality of being Black and middle class where the obligations to large poor extended families remain. Hugo Canham and Rejane Williams (2017) give an account of the racism experienced by first generation middle class Black South Africans. According to Uvanney Maylor and Katya Williams (2011), Black British professionals were uncomfortable with being seen as middle class because it did not capture their experiences of racism. Through their own experiences in France and the United States, classic works by Baldwin (1963), Fanon (1952) and Audre Lorde (1981) have illustrated how Black bodies are read as threatening even when they are middle class. Fanon recounts his experience of being pointed at by a White child in the streets of Paris – "look, a Negro! *Maman*, a Negro!" In response, the mother states: "Don't pay attention to him, monsieur, he doesn't realize you're just as civilized as we are" (1952, p. 93). This example is not a reification of an innate Blackness but an illustration of the impulse of Whiteness to make Blackness visible even when Blacks strive to be simply human. It is for this reason that people such as Biko have argued that racism and thus the achievement of full humanity should be fought outwards from a place of embracing and loving Blackness.

RAGE AS LOVE

Writing about Black death, Biko famously stated: "You are either alive and proud or you are dead, and when you are dead, you can't care anyway" (2004, p. 173). Biko suggests that Black persons under apartheid had no option but to rage against the system if they truly loved themselves. Being alive had to be accomplished with pride, because the alternative was death. In this instance, love and rage are the same. The expression of rage provided the necessary cathartic release from White oppression. The generative

potential of Black rage lies in the promise of the expression of self-love—a psychological declaration or gasp of self-worth and defense against oppression. For Fanon, “At the level of the individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect” (1963, p. 74).

Malcolm X was another advocate of Black love and the necessity of rage as a means to love. He borrowed from the rich tradition of Negritude and Black Power which was a “preoccupation with questions of identity and liberation through self-consciousness and self-definition” (More 2014, p. 175). Negritude and Black Power movements were connected through diasporic literatures. Mabogo More traces the connections between diasporic movements such as Negritude, Black Power, and the BCM by noting that they all subscribed to “...black racial solidarity, group self-reliance, pride in black (African) heritage, black self-love, de-alienation and de-colonisation of the black mind...” (2014, p. 177). According to Cornel West, Malcolm X’s rage was driven by his love for Black people:

He believed that if black people felt the love that motivated that rage, the love would produce a psychic conversion in black people; they would affirm themselves as human beings, no longer viewing their bodies, minds, and souls through white lenses, and believing themselves capable of taking control of their own destinies (1994, p. 136).

The preceding quote conveys the same message that Biko cuttingly communicated when he noted that Black consciousness was “to pump back life into his [the Black man] empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused...” (2004, p. 31). For Biko then, the lack of rage is the same as complicity in the crime of systemic Black denigration. The antidote was therefore to conscientize Black communities to love themselves.

In addition, Malcolm X’s notion of psychic conversion can be likened to Biko’s (2004) call for a Black consciousness that simply attempted to affirm Black people. In this regard, Biko states, “man, you are okay as you are, begin to look upon yourself as a human being” (2004, p. 115). Similarly, in the United States, the Black Power movement was saying; “I want to accept myself first, and my parents, and I want to enjoy the way my mother and father look...” (Baldwin and Mead, 1972, p. 18). For Malcolm X, psychic conversion is the process of change wherein one no longer views her/himself through White lenses. Self-love incorporates a sense of high self-worth. Both the Black Power led by Stokely Carmichael and Biko’s BCM of South Africa were in part a reaction to the long humiliation of Blacks by White oppression. For them, Black-love was not a choice but a condition necessary for living with integrity, and rage was a necessary component of self-love. Black self-love was not about White hate but rather rage against Whiteness and its mythologies of superiority (Mbembe, 2007, 2015). Indeed, BCM advocated alliances with White liberals and supporters as far afield as the Netherlands, Brazil, and the United States of America.

THE AFFECTIVE REGISTER OF BLACK RAGE

Here the paper shifts to illustrate the affective and discursive register of Black self-love, which allows for further theorization of the Black body. Brian Massumi’s (1995) conception of affect has been characterized as radical by discursive exponents of affect such as Margaret Wetherell. Massumi posits that affect is intense, non-conscious,

“outside expectations and adaptation, disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration...” (p. 219). For him, affect is autonomous in that it lacks intent and is the ways in which bodies respond to other bodies and the world. Nigel Thrift (2008) and Kathleen Stewart (2007) add that affect is non-representational. For these non-representational theorists, affect is always in the process of becoming and influences engagement with the world before the mind gets to it. Margaret Wetherell (2012) however takes umbrage with the non-representational theorists and offers an alternative termed “affective meaning making” which problematizes the view that there is an antagonistic relationship between discourse and affect. Here the boundaries of discourse are expanded to include bodies or the psychobiological. This paper supports the discursive frame offered by Wetherell (2012) when she argues for affect as practice rather than the affective as excess. This gives researchers a way of theoretically investigating what is otherwise unspeakable. Patrick Johnson (2001) and Hugo Canham (2014) observe that the terrain of the corporeal and the discursive are not mutually exclusive but are in a dialogical relationship to each other. This allows social science researchers to discursively explore underexplored phenomena such as rage.

Much like Wetherell (2012), Clare Hemmings (2005) argues that many authors like Massumi (1995) and Eve Sedgwick (2003) give affect a degree of autonomy that leaves it relatively unfettered by social forces. Bryan McCann (2013) notes that Hemmings (2005) insists that affect is not pre-political, but entrenched in and subject to historical determinants like race, gender, and class. Black rage is a heuristic historicization of expressions of anger in response to racist oppression. For McCann, when affect is captured in the expressive register of Black rage, it “retains the ability to move and be moved across other social forces and regimes of meaning” (2013, p. 410).

In this paper, I attempt to read the narratives about apartheid and anti-apartheid posters as regimes of meaning which can channel Black rage and render it discursively legible. This paper adds to a vast literature in Africanist and South Africanist scholarship on rage, embodiment, affect and racism. For instance, Mbembe writes that as Blacks, we must “free ourselves from our entrapment in white mythologies” (2015). Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff’s (2003, 2012) ethnographic work in South Africa has explored affect through the attributions of the White Western gaze in making sense of Black experience and Africa. More (2009, 2014) and Mcebisi Ndletyana (2014) provide us with a history of Black thought and Black self-love movements in South Africa and the diaspora. Lewis Gordon (2006) centers African philosophy through the contributions of Biko, Mbiti, and Fanon among others. This paper therefore seeks to consolidate this literature by exploring Black rage at racism through the body.

METHODS

The study analyzes Black rage through an analysis of two sets of texts by drawing together two intertwined archives: one textual (narratives), and the second visual and textual (anti-apartheid posters). The sample was drawn from a corpus of narratives elicited through a call for narratives by the Apartheid Archives Project. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) foregrounded the grand narrative of the apartheid period. Here, I suggest that the TRC was inadvertently understood as the place for telling recognizable truths that were seen as shedding light on important events such as murders of activists. These truths generally fit into the grand arc of the apartheid narrative. The Apartheid Archive Project therefore deliberately focuses on gathering quotidian personal stories and narrative accounts from ordinary South Africans about their experiences of racism during apartheid.³ The aim is to contribute towards

a critical psychosocial mnemonics for individual and collective remembering and this has implications for the past, present and the imagined future (Duncan et al., 2014). The call for narratives was accompanied by an open-ended instruction to contributors to recall and document memories associated with the apartheid period. Some of the narratives straddled both the apartheid and democratic periods thus reflecting continuities of racism but also reminding the reader that storied lives do not occur in linear trajectories. These narratives were submitted in written form to the lead researchers or through the *e* portal accessible through the project website. In this paper, the quotes are referenced by the letter N which signifies the word narrative accompanied by a number (e.g., 4), which refers to the sequence of the narratives in the portal. Thus N4 refers to data from the fourth narrative in the portal.

Against the backdrop of television that was state controlled and an instrument of apartheid propaganda and the repression of oppositional print media, the poster became an important source of information and resistance during the apartheid period. Indeed, the various archives including the Mayibuye Centre archives at the University of the Western Cape, the African National Congress Archives at the University of Fort Hare, the Historical Papers collection at the University of the Witwatersrand, the African Activist Archive in New York, and various similar archives in other parts of the world, have a rich collection of posters and banners from that period. A call to resistance marked by rage is a central theme of many of these posters. A second part of the analysis consequently explores how these posters and banners affectively convey the message of rage against racism. The posters that are analyzed are drawn from the New Zealand Christchurch City Libraries Poster Collection and the South African History Archive (SAHA). The Christchurch City Libraries Poster Collection is the custodian of posters that were created in protest against the South African rugby teams' visit to New Zealand during the anti-apartheid sports boycott. The SAHA houses an extensive digital archive from which two posters were drawn for this study.

RAGE AS AGENCY

Dlamini (2009) has amply illustrated the multidimensionality of life under apartheid as characterized by moments of agency and alienation. The intension here is to highlight the complexity of Black people during apartheid and to present rage as a form of agency. Rage generally manifests in violent eruptions which can be directed outwardly or inwards towards the self. The extract below points to the impotent rage of a Black man when he could not deal with being forcibly removed from his house to make room for a White settlement. It appears that his rage led to his suicide. This suicide echoes Biko's assertion that "you are either alive and proud or you are dead, and when you are dead, you can't care anyway" (2004, p. 173). Since he could not live proudly, this man chose death rather than be subjected to forced removal.

On the day that the families were to move out of Vasco, I was torn from my sleep by the loud wailing of one of our neighbours, Mrs Claassen. I later learnt that she had just returned from an early-morning visit to her sister to discuss the final arrangements for her family's move later that day. On entering her dwelling, she was confronted by the lifeless body of her husband, James, dangling from a beam (N4).

The violence to which Baldwin (1970) and Biko (2004) refer became the reality of the township that this narrator (N4) was forcibly moved to.

And indeed, on our first Saturday in Bishop Lavis, we learnt that a man had been brutally killed two streets away from ours. News of similar incidents was to reach us virtually every Saturday morning thereafter. Gangs of unemployed young men preyed on wage earners in Bishop Lavis on Friday nights, because on Fridays they received their weekly wages. These labourers were easy prey for gangsters, as there was no lighting in any of the streets in the township and people reached their homes quite late because of the poor public transportation system (N4).

When the ghetto is unable to fight the might of the state, it rages against itself. This appears to be a particular feature of working class rage. Baldwin and Margaret Mead reflect on the destructive potential of poverty and rage: “I do know that we are surrounded by poverty and rage, and I know how explosive a formula that is” (1972, p. 172). For Baldwin and Mead, Black people are not driven by a death instinct, but rather they believe that “...all Black people want to live. The Black man, or boy, begins to lash out. He begins to fight and he really has to prepare himself to die, because you cannot accept going through the world covered with White people’s spit” (1972, p. 104–5).

Narrator 19 speaks of his rage at being racially abused by the White receptionist where he worked and by the receptionist’s husband.

Her husband came to collect her at closing time and he felt the need to reinforce her sentiment through screaming and racially insulting me. The rage built up slowly and menacingly throughout the day and in the months that followed (N19).

In this excerpt, the narrator deliberately uses the term “rage.” He later describes hearing about the receptionists’ death as follows:

He lowered his voice to a whisper and in a staccato-like fashion informed me they had both been killed execution-style with a single bullet to the head allegedly by their disgruntled gardener (N19).

He adds the following parting line: “You decide” (N19). While the words invite the reader to take a decision, it is apparent that the narrator has himself taken the decision that the death and its style was a fitting end to the pair. The rage that had built up and simmered over a long period has now been satiated and doused by the violence. It also seems that the pair had caused a ‘killing rage’ in a number of quarters. Their death at the hands of their own gardener attests to this. This relates to Fanon’s (2001) belief that the attainment of freedom was inextricably linked to violence.

A common theme of many of the narratives of the Apartheid Archive Project is the enraging humiliation suffered in restaurants. In these instances, we see how petty apartheid forms of exclusion impacted on individual lives in a quotidian manner that had the cumulative effect of enraging them.

On entering the local Wimpy, we seated ourselves and waited for service. After a short time, the manager approached my father and requested that we leave as the restaurant did not serve non-Whites. My father, probably embarrassed, humiliated and publicly shamed about his powerlessness to act in defence of his family, was enraged and furious with the manager and proceeded to ‘cause a public scene’ to voice a resistance to this practice (N6).

The confluence of emotions that the narrator attributes to his father illustrates that public shaming and humiliation call on rage that can be interpreted as a defensive

assertion of self-love. Baldwin recounts his own experience of a ‘killing rage’ when he was told, “we don’t serve Negroes here”. He states:

...something happened to me which had the force of an optical illusion or a nightmare. And I felt, like a physical sensation, a *click* at the nape of my neck as though some interior string connecting my head to my body had been cut. I wanted to do something to crush these White faces, which were crushing me... (1970, p. 79–80).

Evidence of the embodiment of Black rage is clearly articulated in this excerpt when Baldwin speaks of his killing rage through his body in a viscerally corporeal articulation.

Teun van Dijk (1998) points to the importance of exploring everyday uses of power. This is illustrated by the narrator quoted below. He has a defining memory of an interaction with White power when he was told to watch his step:

For that man this incident might not even be a memory. For me it *is* a memory. And it is symbolic of White race privilege and power in Apartheid South Africa. In some ways we were sheltered from this in our segregated suburbs. But this was a direct encounter, one that I remember vividly. I remember how I felt. And I remember I think now how that man just assumed his power (N5).

The insidious nature of race forces itself on one so that it begins to consume them. For this narrator (N5), it has left no part of his life untouched. He has however harnessed this by taking on a more critical orientation in his work as an academic. If we employ Lorde’s analysis, we can assert that the narrator knows his anger. As an academic, his work employs the principles of Critical Discourse Analyses to positive effect by disrupting racism. He explains it as follows:

I am not interested in only the overt and horrible forms of racism, but the insidiousness of everyday racism, its effects, and the social, cultural, and other symbolic means through which racism is produced and legitimised. This is how it has impacted upon my life. It provides the focus for my work: the effort to disrupt racism, to create a space for the stories of those left out, denied, silenced (N5).

For those with power to dictate the normative rules, their everyday use of this power is something that they hardly reflect upon. For the victim however, this can be bruising and akin to post traumatic stress. Similarly, while the restaurateur may soon forget his expulsion of a Black family from a restaurant, the expelled family does not forget as easily. N6 communicates this memory as follows:

The rest of the day was filled with silences from us as children in the car, while my father lamented our plight and cursed ‘these fucking Whites’ (N6).

The work of dealing with racism is exhausting. White people have the luxury of being spared this daily work. They can decide to do it as activists, but Black people have to do it if they are to survive. This is illustrated in the excerpt below:

...once you are sensitized to racism you never have the luxury of being in a neutral space. It is as if in my lifetime I have acquired a set of antennae that have been encoded and programmed. Daily then, I receive messages—they are

never just neutral. I constantly have to decode and analyse these for possible traces of racism. It is tiring and exhausting and often demeaning and it never seems to end (N9).

The narratives firmly reassert the justification of rage as the reader is often left wondering how anything other than rage is an appropriate response. The following excerpt by N31 is a case in point.

I watched my mother bringing up White kids, serving White people to ensure that we were fed. With each year that passed, I watch her energy slipping away, ounce by ounce.... I watched a life of a parent being offered for the convenience of a White person, until there was nothing left. My mother worked for the one family for more than 20 years. When she left their employ, there was no pension, and not even money for a couple of months. She was discarded because they had no use for her any more (N31).

As crushing as this experience was, the resilience and ingenuity shown outside of the clutches of apartheid is instructive. Thus the narrator of the preceding excerpt has become highly successful and his mother lives a life far removed from her time as a domestic worker. This suggests that even in the moments of oppression, she was able to cheat the system and make a life for herself and her family beyond the clutches of her exploitative employer.

Rage has destructive potential but this may be tied to kernels of resistance. Rage is a necessary space to inhabit in order to begin to resist. The narratives contained in the archive demonstrate the importance of movements such as Black Consciousness for nurturing resistance. Both Biko (2004) and Baldwin and Mead (1972) are conscious of the fact that a people cannot be held down forever. In this regard Baldwin and Mead (1972) stated that one day the bent-over miner toiling for the wealth of White people in South Africa, will stand up and throw off his shackles. The narrator below shows the influential role of the BCM in generating rage and the ability to read the repressive world of apartheid.

My anxieties were transformed into a form of rage, perhaps partly adolescent, perhaps partly a projection, perhaps very real. The centrality of the Black Consciousness Movement and the more critical politics of leftist organizations in the Western Cape provided me with a scaffold on which I could make sense of the world, understand my anxieties and prejudices, and find mechanisms to alter these constructively and coherently (N6).

POSTERS CALL TO RAGE

The second archive that is analyzed here is both visual and textual. This poster archive relates to the Apartheid Archive Project in that it captures the anti-apartheid sentiments of the time and provides representations of embodied Black rage. The two archives both reflect upon the apartheid period, however, they are different in that the narratives are a retrospective remembering while the posters were a call to action by anti-apartheid activists during apartheid. It is important to introduce the work of these posters as they call on a group response that is not apparent in the relatively individualized narratives. The group response in the form of protest is an illustration of the

possibilities inherent in solidarity and a reflection of Ben Anderson's (2009) invocation of atmospheric affect that posits that bodies generate atmospheres that travel between bodies. In addition to the call to action, posters during the apartheid period were also a means of communication within a context of limited formal channels such as telephones or other modern forms of communication. Furthermore, the group response engendered by posters provides the intellectual resources to think about protests in present day South Africa.

Posters were effectively a call to action against apartheid. Thus we have a poster titled, "The Day of Rage, September 12" which bore the face of Steve Bantu Biko against a blood red background which signifies the colour of rage (Figure 1, below).⁴ At the bottom of the poster are three events that occurred on September 12: 1977–Steve Biko was murdered; 1980–NZRFU (New Zealand Rugby Union) invites Boks; 1981–third test Auckland. Here we see positive uses of ideology to standardize events that are quite different but which nevertheless have common features. The murder of Biko on September 12, 1977 has imbued the day with negative symbolism that allows parallels to be drawn with subsequent events which happen on the same day. The invitation of the national rugby team (the Boks) by the New Zealand Rugby Union to play in that country in 1981 is not only seen as a support for apartheid, but its link to the murder of Biko gives the event an air of violence against Black life. Once Biko's murder is affectively linked to the New Zealand Rugby Union and the third test match in Auckland, the reader and viewer of the poster is called to be enraged and participate in the "Day of Rage" on September 12. There is also the implicit threat that blood will be shed in this demonstration of rage. This is symbolized by the red poster which engulfs the image of Steve Bantu Biko who was himself murdered in cold blood by the apartheid security police.



Fig. 1. Day of Rage - Christchurch Public Library poster collection.

The quote by Donald Woods that appears on the poster is a clear call for rage. It proclaims that “these bastards must be fought.” Against the red blood color of the poster, fighting the “bastards” is not ambiguous. It requires the same violence that was used to murder Steve Biko. The sports boycott of South Africa is discursively linked to the brutalization of Black life. The poster illustrates that sports is not neutral and that it is in fact political. By connecting Woods’ statement calling a fight against the “bastards” with the boycott of the South African rugby team, the poster is discursively taking the fight against apartheid to the sports field, and its representation of Afrikaaner nationalism and ideology of apartheid. In addition, this poster was developed for a New Zealand audience and serves as a reminder of the international solidarity against apartheid and the call to rage across narrow racial boundaries.

In South Africa, next to Mandela, Biko is possibly the other person most featured on T-shirts that have been worn from the occasion of his funeral in 1977 (SAHA 2015) to the present. While T-shirts are not the unit of analysis in this paper, I gesture towards them because images on posters were often replicated on T-shirts. It is important to see them as an embodied extension of the representational form such as the poster.⁵ Here the body can be read as an instrument of resistance which dispels images of helplessness.

The posters analyzed in the following section are housed in the South African History Archive (SAHA). Both Figures 2 and 3 are products of the early eighties, a time marked by increased resistance to apartheid that was met by even more brutal oppression against the resistance. June 16, 1976 is seen by many as the turning point in the mobilization of mass resistance to apartheid under the leadership of a radical youth that had increasingly lost faith in the older generation. Thus the Soweto, Langa, and Eastern Cape uprisings in the second half of the 1970’s can be seen as a period of the



Fig. 2. SAHA - The courage of the youth.⁶

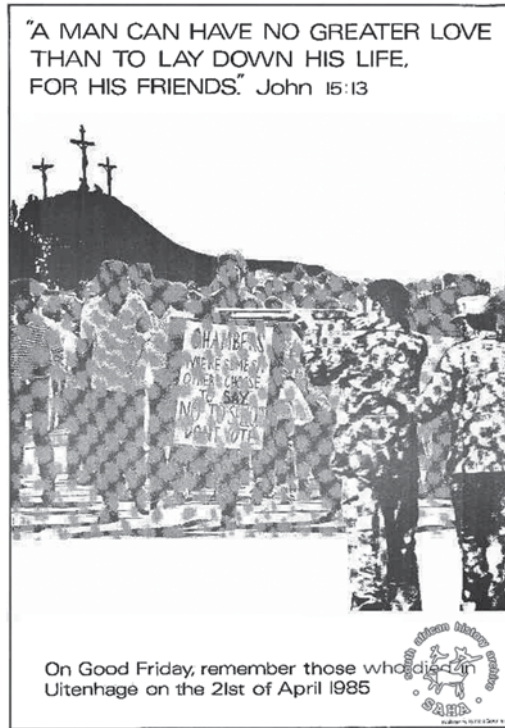


Fig. 3. SAHA - No greater love.⁷

conscientization of the youth in the aftermath of the murder of Steve Biko. Biko himself had been an ardent promoter of the conscientization for Black people to understand and act against their oppression. The poster contained in figure 2 was created by Thami Mnyeli and the MEDU (a SePedi word meaning roots) ensemble and is a call for the youth not to forget the bravery and brutal murder of the youth in 1976. In proclaiming that “the courage of the youth ensures our victory,” youth are being spurred on to increase their resistance and to channel their rage against apartheid. The poster is an illustration of a battleground that is foregrounded by fighting and cheering youth. In the background, the promise of victory looms large with raised weapons and flags marking the moment of triumph that youth are promised will come through force. During a time of boycotts, states of emergency, curfews, and slogans such as liberation before education (Dubow 2014), the restless anger of youth was being channelled into constructive rage by posters like those presented above. Since many believe that it was the violence of the youth that brought the apartheid state to the negotiation table, it can be posited that the rage of the unemployed and the marginalized in post-apartheid South Africa is founded on the view that violence will lead to socioeconomic liberation as it did to political liberation (Ndletyana 2014a).

Figure 3 has a similar motif of rage as that contained in Figure 2. However, the theme of rage as self-love is more cogent in the instance of Figure 3. The poster is from the Catholic Church and draws its inspiration from the bible to spread a message of liberation through the readiness of those who love freedom to fight to their death. Quoting John 15:13, the poster is headlined by the verse: “A man can have no greater love, than to lay down his life for his friends.” Here love and death are seen as the same. Religious ideology is being deployed to positive effect through dissimulation

(Thompson 1990). In a vein similar to that of Biko (2004), death for the course of freedom is love. The poster shows throngs of people descending from the background of a mountain with three crosses recalling the death of Jesus Christ who had also purportedly died for the love of humanity. The steady line of people is however heading for a clash with the state security apparatus that is pointing guns at them in the foreground of the poster. Beatings, mutilation, and death are common responses to expressions of Black rage. Figures such as Luthuli, Biko, Andries Tatane, the Marikana miners, and many others amply illustrate this assertion. Ratele's (2013) account of the death of Black men in South Africa shows the price of inequality and resistance. In the United States of America, the slew of murders of Black men illustrates the borderless operation of White supremacy and neoliberal economic arrangements. This is marked by the lack of value ascribed to Black lives. The "Black lives matter" slogan is thus a reclamation and assertion of equal status and love.

From the headline exalting the virtue of dying for love in the poster, it is clear that some of the people will die, but the promise of victory in death is secure. The tagline in the poster states: "On Good Friday, remember those who died in Uitenhage on the 21st of April 1985." Again, the biblical motif is clear. Christ died on Good Friday thus providing an example for the anti-apartheid activists of Uitenhage who died on the same day. This makes the poster simultaneously a commemoration and a call to action. Within the commemorative turn is the message that those who died in Uitenhage fought a righteous battle. The call to action calls on those left behind to channel their rage about the deaths towards the apartheid system by continuing the righteous fight. The people in the poster carry a message for the state police and thus the observer. The message says 'no to sell-outs' and implores the reader not to vote. This bears a threat that those who vote will be 'selling out' as they will be legitimating a system with no credibility among Black people. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate how both the youth and the church were involved in the anti-apartheid struggle and the role of rage in mobilizing courage and perseverance.

Another image for analysis is a picture poster from an earlier period which simply states: For freedom we will lay down our lives. The struggle continues.⁸ This rallying cry is subsequently captured in a poster housed in the Oakland Museum of California. The online version is accompanied by the following description:

This is a White poster with a blue, yellow, red, and orange image taking up most of the page. The image includes a red, orange, and yellow crown of people raising their fists in the center. The background around them is blue and there are Black images of people interspersed at the bottom of this area as well. Black text in the top left reads "For Freedom We Shall / Lay Down Our Lives. / The Struggle Continues." Black text below the bright colored section reads "African / Liberation Day" and "Colgate / Fights / Cavities / And / Freedom". These sections of text appear on a poster held by the crown of people. Large, yellow text at the bottom of the image reads "Fight Imperialism And / National Oppression / From The Union of South Africa / To The United States of America". There is a quote beginning with "Ours is a continent in revolution against oppression" in bottom left corner. It is attributed to "Chief Albert Luthuli / Late Nobel Peace Laureate".

Like most anti-apartheid posters, this poster features fists pumping in the air. In other posters the fists are sometimes depicted smashing into apartheid symbolism such as police or parliament. Even though the poster has elements of the commercialization of the anti-apartheid struggle through the centrality of Colgate toothpaste,

the poster is simple but carries the potent statement which conveys the self-love implicit in Black rage—"For Freedom We Shall / Lay Down Our Lives." This statement is attributed to former ANC leader Albert Luthuli, and was famously echoed by another ANC president, Nelson Mandela. At the Rivonia Treason Trial, he declared that anti-racism was an ideal for which he was prepared to die. Importantly, the poster gestures to cross national political solidarity across the African continent and the United States of America. This could also be seen as a fusion of forces between the ideologies of Black Power, Negritude, Decolonization, and Black Consciousness—all of which were fueled by Black rage for liberation.

By marching behind the poster, protestors were declaring that they loved Black freedom to the extent that they were ready to lay down their lives for it. This does not imply an affective passivity but a call to arms against White supremacy. The fists raised in the air threaten the racist machinery of apartheid. Photographs of protest marches against apartheid and more recently to express dissatisfaction with the unrealized promises of economic freedom; show protestors baring sticks, bottles, bricks, and various materials for protection and attack.

CONCLUSION

Resistance to oppression during apartheid and in the post-apartheid period is sometimes interpreted as violent riotous behavior driven by criminality. Indeed, the North American press refers to Black protests as riots. This is undergirded by tropes of lack of control, overreactions, and feeding into stereotypes of Black people as primitive, inherently destructive, and in need of policing for the sake of "communal" property and the maintenance of civilization. The generative potential of embodied Black rage is overshadowed and hidden by these dominant ways of understanding Black protest. This paper therefore sought to surface the emancipatory impulse that characterizes Black rage. Here, Black rage is seen as appearing wherever conditions of racism, oppression, and socioeconomic inequality prevail. By analyzing narratives from the Apartheid Archive, the paper illustrated how rage is experienced within the context of the quotidian racist micro-aggressions. The various permutations including the drive towards Black Consciousness frames of interpretation and resistance were shown. In order to surface the movement of affect (Anderson 2009), visual and verbal calls to action in the form of anti-apartheid posters were analyzed. Like many visual cues of the time, the posters illuminated a second element of the productive potential of Black rage. In this regard, Black rage was seen as an expression of Black self-love in that it is the ultimate cry for freedom. The body was shown as central to the expression of Black love. In this regard, the paper noted that affect travels within and between bodies. The internal movement of affect is best captured by the individual-based apartheid narratives while the interbody movement is conveyed in the moment of the group protest.

In order not to unduly romanticize Black rage, it is useful to return to Grier and Cobbs' (1968) who signal both the positive and negative aspects. In the words of McCann, an affective politics of Black rage "should include both a healthy skepticism of the norms of democratic culture, as well as a sober recognition that the deployment of rage is fraught with danger" (2013, p. 415). In South Africa and North America, Black rage is sweeping across both nations in the wake of police brutality and a callous justice system. It is however important to remain vigilant to how rage can fuel reactionary forces such as xenophobia and looting, while also recognizing the generative capacities of Black rage in resisting White supremacy and neoliberal arrangements of

exclusion. Finally, if we are to follow the tenets of the Black Consciousness and Black Power Movements, the dialectic relationship between rage and the promotion of self-love is the greatest attribute of Black rage.

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NOTES

1. This paper was originally presented at the Second Apartheid Archive Conference at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town South Africa. A version was also presented at the Fashioning Masculinities Conference hosted by the Medical Research Council in Cape Town, South Africa.
2. Whiteness in this context is not informed by race essentialism but represents an attitude of White superiority. This paper is informed by a critique of White supremacy and its effects on Black life. It is not a commentary on White people nor does it seek to generalize White supremacy as it clear that some White people have been allies against the system of White supremacy.
3. The Apartheid Archive is housed at the Historical Papers Research Archive at the Cullen Library of the University of the Witwatersrand and exists as an online portal. <<http://www.apartheidarchive.org/site/>>
4. "The Day of Rage, September 12" is housed at the Christchurch Public Library and is reprinted with permission by John Minty.
5. Even more than banners, they are an embodied practise of resistance and externalised testimony of rage where the body itself becomes a political statement.
6. "The courage of the youth ensures our victory." Silkscreened poster, produced by Medu Art Ensemble: Thami Mnyele with Sergio-Albio González, date unknown. Archived at the South African History Archive in SAHA collection AL2446-0597.
7. "A man has no greater love..." Silkscreened poster, issued by the Catholic Grouping, 1986. Archived at the South African History Archive in SAHA collection AL2446-0082.
8. Oakland Museum of California. For Freedom we shall Lay Down our Lives, date unknown. All of Us or None Archive. Gift of the Rossman Family. 2010.54.10805. <<http://collections.museumca.org/?q=collection-item/20105410805>> (accessed November 12, 2015).

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