

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Premesh Lalu, Noëleen Murray, eds. *Becoming UWC: Reflections, Pathways and Unmaking Apartheid's Legacy*. Bellville, South Africa: Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, 2012. Illustrations. 192 pp. No price listed (paper), ISBN 978-1-86808-727-3.

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Published on H-SAfrica (October, 2012)

Commissioned by Alex Lichtenstein

In 2012 the University of the Western Cape (UWC) turned fifty. That milestone alone demands retrospection and celebration given UWC's place in South Africa's higher education setup. But such celebration also comes with pitfalls: "Histories of universities are difficult undertakings because they open onto such complex questions of our modern subjectivity and its relations to the exercise of power, not to mention the internal dynamic which proves elusive at the best of times," write coeditors Premesh Lalu and Noëleen Murray in the introduction to this volume (p. 21).

From the book it is clear that UWC—as the university is more generally known—struggles with its roots. It has its origins in apartheid's grand plan as a separate university for coloureds. "The original planners of UWC in the late 1950s hoped that, hidden from view, it would offer no views of its own," writes Lalu, a former UWC student and now professor of history who heads up the Centre for Humanities Research on the campus (p. 37).

UWC's location is significant. It is situated on the outskirts of Cape Town, close to the airport and a series of impoverished coloured townships bordering an industrial area that is hard to reach, even by public transport. That contrasts sharply with the surroundings of the two other major universities in the area, the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch University, both with extensive resources and with roots in whites-only education. Slurs abound for UWC based on these racial and regional distinctions: for example "Colouredstan" and "the bush." These have been turned into badges of honor, but UWC is still synonymous with "lack and burden," though the university's national role in political, social, and economic life is assured.

The editors have ambitious aims: to engage with the racial origins of the university and the "normalizing racial discourse" it bolstered. "Specifically," they write, "we are interested in what it meant to overturn and dis-

avow the apartheid foundations of the university and how, in challenging these precepts, the university may unfortunately have been rendered blind to the pitfalls of nationalism" (p. 19).

Though the book never provides a chronology of UWC's fifty-year history, the outlines emerge clearly. These include its austere beginnings in apartheid higher education; replication of the Calvinism of Afrikaner universities (students, mostly young men, were "required to wear ties and jackets," as English professor Julia Martin states in her essay [p. 25]); repression of politics; and the fact that administrators, with few exceptions, were all Afrikaners. In the early 1970s, the pro-government university council appointed the first nonwhite vice chancellor, Richard van der Ross (in South Africa, university presidents are known as vice chancellors). Van der Ross's tenure also coincided with the radicalization of UWC student politics, followed by the rejection in 1982 by the new rector, Jakes Gerwel, of the "political-ideological grounds" on which UWC was established. Later, as Martin notes, in 1987, Gerwel declared UWC "the intellectual home of the democratic Left," as separate from the "liberal" white campuses (UCT, Rhodes University, and Wits University) and Afrikaner universities (like Stellenbosch) with their ties to apartheid (p. 27). In the early 1990s, UWC became "the premier institution" from whence the African National Congress (ANC) prepared to govern (p. 93).

The book carefully balances the fine line between celebration and critical distance. Poems (by, among others, the late Arthur Nortje) and photographs (both from the university's own archive and a set commissioned from photographer Ingrid Masondo) complement chapters on space, architecture, personal recollections (by history professor Ciraj Rasool), and reflections on UWC's academic legacy. More recent history appears with a discussion by Leslie Witz of controversy around an on-campus

exhibition of photographs by Zanele Muholi documenting the black lesbian experience in South Africa; and Neil Myburgh's chapter on the transformation of the dental faculty (UWC absorbed Stellenbosch's dental school).

The book suggests that the legacies of Van der Ross and Gerwel still need to be unpacked. Van der Ross—characterized briefly by Lalu as complicated, if mostly, negative; he attempted to “translate apartheid’s reason for separate education into a project of class mobility” (p. 53)—later emerged as a member of parliament for a small white opposition party, while Gerwel has had a larger role. In fact, his public profile has overshadowed his equally impressive academic work, which includes his scholarship on Afrikaans cultural politics. Gerwel also played a central role in constructing the new post-apartheid state. He went to work as chief of staff for the new president, Nelson Mandela. Separately, he has

worked to increase black people’s share in the economy, fronting, for example, a share scheme by an Afrikaner-owned multinational media company.

Early in the book, Martin captures UWC’s new challenge. She writes that UWC’s origins and development over the last fifty years “seems distant history” to the university’s current crop of students who face a new set of dilemmas. This generation of students wants “to talk about love and Palestine and the corporate branding of their clothes. About music, imagination, and the politics of food. About poverty, displacement, desire and education. About the internet, the spiritual quest, and the globalization of the mind” (p. 29). However, Martin, finds that “for all their techno-cool, the present generation of students seem more tender than their predecessors were, less confident of victory” (p. 30).

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Citation: Sean Jacobs. Review of Lalu, Premesh; Noëleen Murray; eds., *Becoming UWC: Reflections, Pathways and Unmaking Apartheid’s Legacy*. H-SAfrica, H-Net Reviews. October, 2012.

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