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ABSTRACT

South Africa can be described as a land of protest. Protest action has not only become common in recent years through protest movements such as the Fees Must Fall movement, but it is also a poignant part of our country's history with its use being crucial in the struggle against apartheid and other such injustices. In 2015, the Fees Must Fall protests began at the University of the Witwatersrand and were initiated by students and youth who had something powerful to say. However, power structures and issues of misrepresentation have prevented students from having sufficient platforms to share their stories and experiences from their point of view. A qualitative-based participatory action research method called photovoice was used which asked Wits students to take photographs of their understanding and feelings of protest action and share their experiences through these images and their explanation. The project aimed to create a safe space where students could metaphorically 'shoot back' in a non-violent form of protest using photographs. It provided an opportunity for 11 participants to share a wide array of viewpoints and perspectives on protesting and to develop a mindset of critical consciousness about the topic. It also functioned as a protest in and of itself, in that it acted as an avenue through which participants could have a voice and explore their views through the themes of Voice, Change and action, Violence and disruption, Power relations, Protest culture and Equality and justice. Furthermore, it acted as an avenue through which the researcher could protest about aspects of the field of psychology, research and knowledge production which are arguably outdated, exclusive and perpetuate a discriminatory and colonial agenda. The intention is that more research of this nature, which challenges conventions in research production, is more democratic in its approach and distribution and which values indigenous South African knowledge is produced in future studies.

Keywords: Community Psychology, Participatory Action Research, Protest, Protest Action, Photovoice