

https://dspace.org/

Loss, rage and laughter: texturing protest action against sexual violence on the South African campus and its existence online

Mbali, Mazibuko

2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27384

Mazibuko, Mbali (2018) Loss, rage and laughter : texturing protest action against sexual violence on the South African campus and its existence online, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27384

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the emergence of anti-rape activism within and beyond the bounds of the post-apartheid South African university. It examines the campus contexts of the University Currently Known as Rhodes (UCKAR) and the University of the Witwatersrand-Johannesburg (Wits). These campus contexts function as sites of feminism, naked protest action and anti-rape campaigns that have moved beyond the campus and into other public spaces. This thesis positions the #RememberKwezi silent protest lead by four Black womxn students as a lens in which to make sense of how student-lead activism transcends the boundaries of the university. This thesis also makes sense of these three contexts as offline happenings that extend into online worlds like Twitter. Through textual analysis of tweets and hashtags, this thesis demonstrates how the extension of offline protest action to online worlds like Twitter create a global pool of activism to confront the plight of womxn. This thesis analyzes the uses of rage in the contemporary feminist movement through the emergence of the anti-rape campaign under the hashtag #RUReferenceList from the University Currently Known as Rhodes. It examines laughter as a response to womxn's protest action in the context of Wits University and considers the implications that laughter at womxn's activism has on contemporary processes of building a feminist movement. This thesis asserts that the hashag #RememberKwezi functions as an invitation to reflect on the ways in which womxn's experiences of rape have been treated by society and the justice system. The #RememberKwezi campaign memorializes the difficult life of Fezekile Kuzwayo and a number of other womxn who have been raped. This hashtag also becomes representative of the loss felt as a result of being raped, victim-blamed and failed by the law. Within this context, feeling, sentiments and sensations are understood as deliberate feminist protest repertoires that characterize the current feminist movement building process.

Key words: Feminist; Twitter; Hashtag; South African university; Student-activism; Sexual violence; Anti-rape; Protest action; Emotion