

Abstract

This research report focusses on the experiences of young white students of the increased conscientization of black youth in the South African context. Five white students were recruited through snowball sampling. The interviews that were conducted with the participants were semi structured and explored what the students' experiences were. The project made use of interpretive phenomenological analysis in collecting and analyzing the data. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is Critical Race Theory.

The data collected from the participants revealed that young white students feel a sense of diminished belonging within the University community in light of the increased conscientization of black youth. There is a sense that young white students feel let down by previous white generations as they have largely felt unprepared for the demands of the black student movement.

Participants accounts revealed a limited understanding of the daily struggles of many black students which leads to white students viewing their places at universities as assured and legitimate while viewing black students' places as a product of a transformative agenda which makes them less legitimate. There also is a feeling of voicelessness and alienation from the student movement, the student community and even the country which leads to them considering leaving the country as they feel unrepresented.

The participants reflected on the irreconcilable approaches to understanding race that are experienced from childhood where there is a view that black people are subhuman but also good enough for child rearing. Most participants experienced deep connections to their domestic helpers which has made it hard to reconcile with the status of black people within society. Secondary to this is the experience of black youth who exist outside of the confines of their privileged spaces, who are not interacting with white youth for their benefit or comfort and through whom these white youth experience black rage. Lastly, young white students also expressed a desire to belong to a social justice movement and in turn equate the black student movement to other social justice movements such as gender-based violence, climate change and health which they feel they can belong to.