We are not fully Citizens of our Universities

African Women leaders, Non-belonging and Construction of New Cultures and Citizenships in South African Higher Education

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Abstract

The post-Apartheid and #FeesMustFall higher education landscape has created opportunities for universities in South Africa to foster in transformation as it pertains to gender, language, sexuality, disability, race and other minority markers. More so, the accessibility of the student and staff demographic has meant that in some cases, African women can emerge to various positions of power. This paper, through phenomenological reflections of five African women leaders in South African universities, considers the ways in which citizenship and belonging are navigated through the mapping of their leadership journey. Furthermore, this paper explores the possibilities within the African feminist scholarship to argue that African women leaders use their agency to determine humanizing institutional cultures.

Key words: African women, higher education, transformation, institutional cultures, leadership

Introduction

The earliest reference to a university in Africa, can be traced to three genealogies, the "intellectual tradition of the Nile Valley Egyptian–Nubian–Ethiopian civilization: the Afro-Arabic/Muslim intellectual tradition as well as the precolonial Mali–Songhai–Ghana Timbuktu intellectual tradition" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, 52). In citing Mama (2005), Tau (2022) reminds us that, following the establishment of modern universities, institutions of





higher learning were colonial colleges which were entrenched in patriarchy. As such, modern European universities, located in Africa (universities in Africa) "functioned as spaces to reproduce cultural and social norms" (Tau, 2022, 16). This extension of European universities or universities located in Africa, meant that universities would give exclusionary access to African men as a way of continuing the legacy of colonialism (see Mama, 2003).

The current Higher education landscape in South Africa is made up of public and private universities, TVET (Technical, Vocational Education, and Training) colleges, and a range of post-school private institutions (Moodley-Diar, 2021 and Tau, 2022). The mergers use institutions of higher learning as a means to address transformation but have not managed to alleviate the epistemic violence of the history of some institutions, of which the #FeesMustFall movement, amongst others, revealed. Because fundamentally the #FeesMustFall movement(s) were able to demonstrate that the failures within the post-apartheid higher education landscape indicate to a much deeper problem of exclusion for black South Africans (Nyamnjoh, 2016 and Tau, 2022). And today, as universities remain sites of contestations, many of these are in conflict with each other (Hartmann, 2019) which part of the challenge is how to achieve decolonization within an inherited westernized institution (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

The relationship between the history of the European university is essential to understanding the university in South Africa, which exists as an extension of the colonial institution, especially in the context of the transformation discourse (Tau, 2022). Because of this backdrop, the university of today needs to be understood with this contradiction, as a space that was not designed for Africans and women to be in, yet they are currently leading the institutions. And are responsible for the strategic imperatives of the spaces.

The South African higher education landscape following the end of the Apartheid regime, ushered in possibilities for how tertiary education could best reflect the demographics of the country. In pushing the boundaries and establishing transformation strategies, the government set "to plan the development of the education and training system for the benefit of the country as a whole and all its people" (DHET, 2005, 2). This is against the backdrop of the Apartheid government having excluded and constrained the black indigenous people of South Africa from the freedom to live and study where they chose, ultimately "denying them access to education and

development" (Pandor, 2018:1). This racial systemic organization of South African society created the disparities between the universities and the broader sector, affecting how they are governed and funded (Lebelo, 2021).

Universities, which are understood as locations of knowledge production, carry new meanings particularly in the second decade of democracy in South Africa. This period has complexified this meaning, as institutions of higher learning have also become sites of challenging hegemonic knowledge systems, institutional cultures and policies (Cini, 2019; Lebelo, 2021; Tau, 2022).

The various student movements over fees in tertiary institutions and more recently, the #Must Fall student movements (2015-2017) have demonstrated that the texture and being of these institutions continues to be rooted in the "imperial/colonial/apartheid tradition" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, 55), leaving many students and staff feeling disconnected from the very same institutions. Proving the fact, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2017) reminds us that South Africa was imaged to be a 'little Europe' and such the university in Africa, in its culture and operational structure of bureaucracy is transplanted from Europe.

Hlatshwayo, Mashaba, Mathuloe and Yende (2022) postulate that there has been a rise in women in positional power, as the South African higher education landscape "has undergone a gender stereotype reversal, largely due to an increase in women in leadership positions such as vice-chancellors, rectors, deans, and department heads" (p.8). According to Naidu (2021), institutions are still grappling with meeting their transformation imperatives, whilst having to ensure that they have a gender transformation agenda and strategy "with succession plans cognizant of gender imperatives in place" (2021,1). Fundamentally, the advancement of women in leadership is necessary to "transform exclusionary structures, cultures, and practices that ensure the marginalization of women in universities" (Idahosa, 2019, p. 4). Kele and Peterson (2015) postulates that the mergers were intended to consider the ways in which policies would establish conditions to promote women to leadership positions. That is because institutions of higher learning sit with the responsibility of not only transforming their institutions but to challenge the gendered power relations within society as well. In so doing, institutions need to "address institutional cultures which are awash with gender–based power constructs that contribute towards keeping women out of higher education leadership" (CHE, 2008: 1). Additional to these are work

and family responsibilities such as care work, lack of networks and mentoring and traditional sociocultural realities (Moodly,2022).

Locating Gender in the South African Higher Education Landscape

South Africa has 26 institutions of higher education, of which only six are led by female Vice Chancellors, these being: Nelson Mandela University; Central University of Technology; University of Mpumalanga; University of Zululand; Walter Sisulu University and the University of South Africa. According to Amina Mama (2009), public universities, in striving to produce "generations of well-educated citizens, seem to have remained largely oblivious to the challenges of gender inequality" (2009, 7). This is because the colonial project was elitist and gendered. Which "ensured that only a select few would have access to the political, economic and university structures, and this was through the design of upper and lower classes within society. Secondly, on the gendered front, this upper mobility within the ranks of society or its structure was only limited to men, thus limiting the capacities of women to that of the household in the roles of mother and wife" (Tau, 2022, 16). In essence, the adoption of the university on the continent was always textured by gender and race (Mama and Barnes, 2007).

More so, various strides have been made in the sector to address gender inequality which include, the White Paper on Education (DHET, 1997); the National Plan for Higher Education (DHET, 2001); the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (Republic of South Africa, 2013). In addition to these legislations has been the Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) Programme, established in 2022 as part of the Department of Higher Education and Training's University Capacity Development Programme. HELM addresses leadership development and capacity for managers and senior leaders in higher education institutions. HELM hosts a Women in Leadership (WiL) program which considers transformative leadership processes to inform and equip women to lead in the changing and dynamic higher education context. Another structure being the Higher Education Resource Services South Africa (HERS-SA) was established in 2003 and is a self-sustaining Non-Profit Organization that focuses on addressing the low numbers of women occupying senior positions in the higher education sector. Moodly and Toni (2017) remind us that despite the establishment of transformative policies,

women are still limited by the 'glass ceiling' which challenges their access to leadership positions.

Leadership has been historically preserved and stereotypically characterized as male (Moodley-Diar, 2021 and Karelaia and Guillen, 2014) globally. This perception, however, is being challenged by with the growth in female leaders (Kapasi, Sang, and Sitko, 2016). In the African American context, women have been integral in the civil rights movements, and "were susceptible to interlocking systems of sexism and racism that permeated public and higher education" (Jean-Marie, 2008). The South African higher education landscape, in carrying a particular legacy, is also interwoven with the perspectives of society, it is "as much a creature of its past as it is a creature of sustained effort, through policy, legislation and institutional restructuring, to redirect and transform it" (CHE, 2016, 5). However, the Higher Education and Skills in South Africa by Maluleke (2019) shows that there are changes in how we are noticing more females at both masters (41.8% to 44.6%) and doctoral levels (increase from 38.1% to 58.2%) of which this is instrumental for women to be eligible for leadership positions (Moodley-Diar, 2021 and Maluleke, 2019).

The highest percentage of graduates were females and their percentage was steadily rising since 2000.

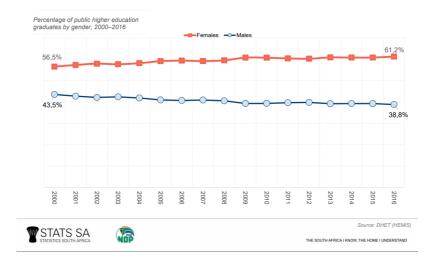


Figure 1: Percentage of graduates per gender 2000-2016 [extracted from: http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12049]

The data from this report shows that female participation in the higher education landscape, was 58% for public universities and 57% for TVET colleges (Maluleke, 2019). According to Toni & Moodly, (2019), breaking the glass ceiling continues to be a challenge as most women are in middle management and there is still a lack of representation in the higher ranks of management. This challenge persists because of the existence of perceptions about women leadership which include "gendered power dynamics, misconceptions about women's leadership abilities, male patterns of networking, work-home life balance, prioritising family, and lower self-confidence than male counterparts" (Moodley-Diar, 2021, 8). Because institutions of higher learning are more than merely institutions, the structure and culture of the institutions should be understood more complexly as they inform and establish narratives about identities and groups of people (African women). That is because institutions establish which histories and intellectual legacies are considered to be valuable and deserving to be critically engaged (Gebrial, 2018).

More so, the 2018, Council on Higher Education (CHE) report on students and staff demographics in higher education (2011-2016) demonstrates this growth in the number of women in senior positions (see Figure 2 below). Seale, et.al., (2021: 136) further suggests that,

"For women to take up senior leadership roles more potently, it is essential that women not only cope with and compete in patriarchal systems but more so, that women leaders are equipped to change patriarchal hegemony and shift management discourse and culture to a pluralistic leadership culture where transformational leadership becomes the norm while delivering on the set agenda and goals".



^{*} Higher education.

Figure 2: Headcount senior management staff members by gender from 2011 to 2016 [extracted from CHE, 2018]

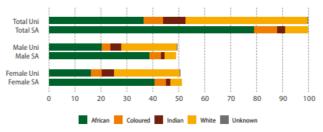
Representation of women in academia is about more than just meeting the transformation markers such as numbers, because the "presence or absence of female academic leaders can have far-reaching influences not only on the institutions themselves, but on the scope of research and knowledge that affects us all" (The White House Project, 2009,16). In supporting this positions, Madsen (2012) postulates that the inclusion of women in academic spaces also allows for research to be conducted differently, thus widening the knowledge and the perspectives from the findings are nuanced. Heleta (2016) postulates that although policies have been put in place to address transformation, universities have not fully opened themselves to the diversity of knowledge and knowledge making bodies. This culture is seen predominantly within the curriculum of universities however it is rooted in broader exclusionary ideologies and practices based on gender and race amongst other identity markers.

The Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics published in 2019 (see Figure 3 below) suggests that African females remain underrepresented in terms

^{**} Population numbers are in thousands.

of instructional and research staff at South African universities. Generally, the challenges hindering the success of women in the higher education landscape are the institutional cultures of university, of which African women inherit when they enter positional power. Furthermore, societal narratives founded on patriarchal interests also discourage women from leadership, and with the recent rise in student protests which are often masculinist and violent in nature (see Booysen, 2016; Jansen, 2017). Thus, the factors to break the glass ceiling are a culmination of intersecting demands that have come to characterise the nature of the higher education sector (Moodly, 2022). By at least 16.1%, represented in the academy, meanwhile the general African female population is at 40.4%. Zulu (2016) argues that unchanged and untransformed institutional cultures and "socio-cultural beliefs that discriminate against women [are what] obstruct women's paths to promotion" (Zulu, 2016: 7). Hlatshwayo et.al. (2022) and Mhlanga (2013) remind us that because the academic hierarchy and senior positions in disciplines are held by men, this male domination and gender inequality persists because of the legacies of prejudice (Belluigi and Thondhlana, 2019).

FIGURE 8: The demographic distribution of permanent instructional/research staff at universities (HEMIS) compared to the demographic distribution of the 25–64 cohort in the general South African population (Statistics South Africa 2018 mid-year population estimates)



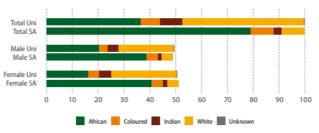
24 Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics

Figure 3: Distribution of permanent instructional/research staff at universities [extracted from the Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics. Published by the Department of Higher Education and Training November 2019. www.dst.gov.za]

On the other hand, Figure 4 (below) the Ministerial Task Team reported that male staff "are dominant in senior posts and female staff are dominant in

junior posts. Academic leadership at universities is still dominated by white and male academics" (2019: 29). Because patriarchy is directly linked to how gender roles are perceived, these statistics also reveal that leadership is still read or understood as male and heteropatriarchal, "where authority and power have been and/or is reserved for men" (Nzimande, 2019: 10).

FIGURE 8: The demographic distribution of permanent instructional/research staff at universities (HEMIS) compared to the demographic distribution of the 25–64 cohort in the general South African population (Statistics South Africa 2018 mid-year population estimates)



24 Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics

Figure 4: Distribution of permanent instructional/research staff at universities [extracted from the Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics. Published by the Department of Higher Education and Training, November 2019. See, www.dst.gov.za]

The Report by the Task Team further reveals that the dominance of male African leaders, is not the only barrier to the progression of African women's emergence into leadership, as the most dominant are male and white academics. This again exposes the tensions faced by African women in the academy. They struggle to build networks or communities of fellowship (which I explore later on) either based on race or gender, of which they cannot always make a separation between the two identity markers.

Another study by Moodly (2021) shows that there has been an increase of women Vice Chancellors. For instance, in 2020, 2019 and 2016, "the percentage was 15.38 per cent (4 of 26)...women in the position of DVC Research had increased from five (5) in 2013/14 (in twenty-three public universities) to ten (10) in 2019 (in twenty-six public HEIs), and for DVC Academic, it had increased from six (6) in 2013/14 (in twenty-three public HEIs) to eleven (11) (in twenty-three public HEIs) to eleven (11) (in twenty-three public HEIs).

six public HEIs), in 2019" (Moodly, 2021: 185-186). Fundamentally, since the democratic dispensation, the higher education sector has not reached the 50 percent mark in senior positions.

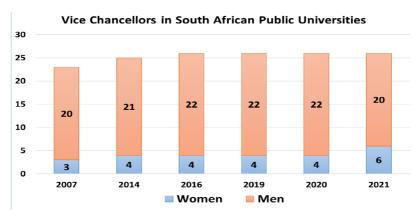


Figure 5: Number of men and women as Vice-Chancellors in South African public universities (extracted from Moodly, 2021: 185). These figures come as no surprise considering that universities were established for men and by men (Mama, 2003; Gallagher and Morison, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). Because of societal responsibilities, care work at home and at work, women have very different leadership journeys compared to men (Moodly, 2022; Magogwana et.al, 2019).

Theoretical framework

African feminist theory emerged out of a rejection of the mainstream and western understanding of feminism, that located itself within gender politics whilst ignoring issues of race, class and geographical contextualisation's and inform the ways in which African women construct their agency. Of which Sylvia Tamale (2020) reminds us that a productive reading of African (and women) lives should be within the understanding that the African identity is one that has been historically politicized. Similarly, Appiah (1992) argues that African or Africanness as an identity is rooted in a colonial conceptualisation and gaze.

According to Goredema (2010: 34), "African Feminism is a feminist epistemology and a form of rhetoric that has provided arguments, which validate the experience of women of Africa and African origin against a mainstream feminist discourse. It is a justice... and a social movement that aims to raise a global consciousness which sympathises with African women's histories, present realities and future expectations". This paper locates itself within an African feminist framework, to address the ways in which the academy and other colonial institutions have made use of exclusion as a practice of which African women have managed to organise and mobilize themselves, regardless of (April 2012). In the exclusion of African women and women's lives, this meant that when women entered these spaces, the "terms and conditions of how they functioned and existed were predetermined" (Tau, 2022: 48). According to Lewis (1993) mainstream feminist discourse did not see African women African women as part of their culture, because "when white middle-class feminists talk about 'women,' they mean white women, in the same way, that discussions of racism are usually predicated based on the experience of black men" (540). And as such, this study positions African women at the centre of expressing and articulating their experiences.

Methodology

The study used a qualitative design and specifically, existential phenomenology to explore the experiences of African women leaders in universities, to ascertain what informs their leadership practices. This study used phenomenology to focus on the ways in which the experiences of being in institutions of higher learning as African women has influenced the performance of their leadership styles and strategies. As a philosophy, phenomenology "rejects the idea that meaning and identity take place from a position of disembodied consciousness; instead, phenomenology argues that there is a relationship between human consciousness, thought and knowledge of the world" (Tau, 2022, 9). Merleau-Ponty's (1962) position on (existential) phenomenology, argues that human knowledge is best understood and found through the structures of human action (living) in the world. Motsemme postulates that existential phenomenology "offers a productive lens of inserting the body back into social theory without getting caught in the dichotomy of embodiedness and body-lessness, nor to notions of embodiment that are reducible" (2011, 98). Which is against the tradition of thinking about the body as

passive, text and without agency that "brings the world into being" (Bakare-Yusuf, 2001, 53).

This paper examines the ways embodied experiences of African women leaders can advance meaning making because their gendered and racialised bodies "attract, and are the targets of, classism, racism and patriarchy" (Khunou, Canham, Khoza-Shangase, and Phaswana, 2019: 4). Because "existential phenomenological ideas of the body choose to forefront the body as a place of fundamental ontology" (Motsemme, 2011: 98). Existential phenomenology as emphasized by Ponty and later by Bakare-Yusuf (2001) and Motsemme (2011) in context to African women's bodies and meaning making, they are that our mere existence is grounded in what our bodies are or must be in the world and what that experience is. Because the socio-political contexts that African women's bodies find themselves in, influence their personhood and thus the process of them being in the world. So, the body is part of our "meaning-making strategies in our social worlds" (Motsemme, 2011, 98).

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants because the research was specific to these participants. Later, snowballing was employed, as the participants were middle to high-ranking leadership. Five participants were selected from various universities in South Africa, their positions ranged from Directors, Deans to Vice Chancellors. All the participants were women, and the criteria was exclusively women belonging to African descent: Black, Khoi-Khoi, San, so called Coloured and Indians identities coming from a heritage of colonial oppression "as they are subjects which have been historically excluded from the academy as well as leadership within the university" (Tau, 2022: 11). Noting that women of European decent also enter the university space after men, they were excluded from this study because they exist within a "dominant power-epistemic privilege" (Motsemme, 2003:71) giving them the advantage of accessing the university and leadership structures over African women.

Engaging the Data

The question guiding this study was to explore the ways in which African female leaders in universities relate to feminism or African feminisms and whether "Feminism or African feminism inform the experiences of women who are leaders at universities in South Africa?". The two secondary questions of the research that became pertinent as participants reflected on their experiences were:

- 1. In what ways do gender and race shape their experiences of leadership and the university?
- 2. In what ways do the cultures of universities affect their leadership?

The Participants are labeled from A-E, with the p capitalized as symbolism of their names and titles which remain confidential. I have also assigned a different leadership position per participant; however, all participants fall within the bracket of middle to high level of leadership.

Participant	Identity marker (based on how participants referred to themselves)	Position (changed by researcher)
Participant A	African	Director of institute
Participant B	African	Director of School
Participant C	Black and African	Vice Chancellor
Participant D	African	Deputy Vice Chancellor
Participant E	Black	Executive Dean

The secondary questions emerged as a result of the conversation between the participants and researcher? Participant A shared:

"The university is supposed to be for the public good, and if a university is for the public good, then it needs to be good to all its publics and women is part of those publics, and we are not visible in this...". Responding to another question on the citizenship of women in the universities, Participant A noted,

"You know, we are citizens, but I think we are not fully, we are not those fully academic citizens that we should be. There are a lot of strong women emerging, lots of strong young women leaders emerging; maybe things will change. I don't know, but it's still very much a masculine space. We know that. Some people say, "Do we just like, you know, do we just need to demolish the whole university and start from scratch?" because, you know, it is so... it carries this legacy...".

Citizenship as McEwan (2005) argues, comes into play differently depending on one's socio-political contexts. Within the South African context, the end of apartheid for black women signaled the recognition for them to be full citizens, however there is still a tension as "inequality still looms as women's

lived experiences continue to be minimally recognised" (Segalo, 2015: 79). In explaining this tension, Yuval-Davis (1991) reminds us that citizenship requires a form of membership into a community and an experience of the rights and responsibilities within that community. Participant A raises two points in this quest for citizenship within the university space. The first is that the university is a changing structure of which we can see this through the inclusion of women and the continuous strides in retaining younger and emerging women into the academy. This is positive in the transformation trajectory of the university as the dynamic of who are in the the process of knowledge making and production are fundamental to changing the outlook of the university and what it will become for future generations. The second thing raised in this reflection is the question of legacy, and Participant A wonders if the university should be dismantled as it stands. Because the space itself is not framed to be an inclusive community, thus African women continue to face these tensions within the space and the questioning of their level of citizenship within the space, if any citizenship is ever recognized.

The literature on gender and citizenship, also shows that the debate around citizenship shifts when one group needs to give another citizenship, because a kind of citizenship that is given, can simply be taken away. This raises the question on whether universities really want to change their legacies of exclusion of marginalized groups and persons. And if the "awarding" of citizenship is something to be celebrated as that power can be taken away, as opposed to the establishing of different and new institutions where citizenship and community is framed in inclusive ways. Elsewhere, McEwan (2010: 739) reminds us that the end of apartheid was an attempt to "establish historical truth and collective memory for black women, who have often been most marginalised by colonialism and apartheid and excluded from dominant accounts of history". Here, Participant A reflects that this ideal has not been achieved yet and I argue that the ways in which African women leaders are thinking of the university is to build a new kind of legacy of what universities could represent. Their leadership particularly pushes back against this legacy of exclusion, and even amidst transformation trajectories, they can identify that there is something missing from how we measure progress. And for as long as the quality of the livelihoods of African women does not change within these spaces, then we cannot claim full citizenship in the university community.

The other Participants in addressing the question of citizenship by Participant A, believe strongly that their leadership is particularly meant to establish these communities which ultimately can lead to establishing new institutional cultures or universities as mentioned above. Participant E shares that leadership is about making the linkages between the personal individual and the institution:

"[I want to establish a] leadership that sought to explain to everybody that they are fine to be who they [are], is fine to come on into these institutions and retain their identity. So, for me, it's important that when we talk about leadership, when I talk about leadership [and] when I talk about myself as a leader, I don't see my leadership only being in instances where I was labelled as such by the institution..."

Participant E's vision as a leader, seeks to address the ways in which institutions tend to make one feel as if they do not belong within the spaces, however in addition to that it wants to ensure that those that fully belong should assimilate and change who they are to fit in. Yuval-Davis (2006) postulates that belonging is associated with feelings of being home and safe which becomes complex when threatened as this tends to politicize belonging. The challenge of African women leaders as we see here is that they take up the responsibility of having to address how the apartheid categories of socialization, of race, gender and class (Tau, 2022) have a deep-rooted legacy even in a post-apartheid context of maintaining "mechanisms that determine who belongs and who does not" (Murunga, 2005: 397).

Of course, part of how one addresses this is to engage with the regime and cultures that have produced these legacies (Gqola, 2006), because now the work of African women leaders is also to mediate how to make the invisible, visible in complex and productive ways when colonialism and apartheid have particularly "used these women's hypervisibility as a way to violate them" (Gqola, 2006, 84). Gabeba Baderoon's (2011) work, specifically challenges us to consider the ways in which we look at bodies, where the ways in which those bodies are understood and viewed is a consequence of history. Participant E's leadership focuses on this, that African and black women who find themselves in the academy need not content with their identities and should be comfortable not only in their identities however in associating themselves as part of the identity of the space, the university. For Baderoon (2011) in referring to Zanele Muholi's work, African women in the academy when they are "given a space to write themselves, [ought to know that] they have ownership over their own voices" (2011, 398).

Participant B explains that part of building a community and framing a sense of belonging for African women in the academy is to be cognizant of the ways in which narratives and stereotypes creep in to keep them of the university community. Participant B, recalling a moment when they had hired a woman candidate for a leadership position, posits, "she was the best candidate...I think we must do that for quite some time because it takes a long time for people to unlearn their stereotypes. So, we must keep on emphasising that. So that they understand that women are put in these positions because they are the best in relation to whoever they competed against". These types of stereotypes are part of the ways in which institutions maintain their old order of doing things, these boys clubs or as Zulu (2003: 99) refers to them, the "old boy network' ensures that women are left out of these critical information networks where important decisions are sometimes made, often in places frequented mostly by men."

Puwar (2004) further reminds us that this type of citizenship is a big negotiation which leaves women often at the receiving end. Although women can and do enter the university space, "it is certain types of bodies that are tacitly designated as being the 'natural' occupants of specific positions. Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong. In contrast, others are marked out as trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually), circumscribed as being 'out of place" (Puwar, 2004: 8). Kiguwa postulates that because universities are already constructed to host a specific kind of character and culture, that establish these pre-existing tropes, so when African women leaders entering this space means that their "bodies take up meaning in these spaces and [have to] navigate [their] presence in relation to these narrative tropes" (Kiguwa, 2019: 13). Participant B, who spoke to the committee that she was in, noted that indeed this woman candidate was qualified. This speaks to the ways in which women have to remind these spaces that they are citizens of the university too.

Similarly, Lihle Ngcobozi in *Mothers of the Nation: Manyanno women in South Africa* (2020), argues that the role of black women in community leadership is fundamental to the operations of communities, more so what Participant B demonstrates is that the leadership roles of African women in the university is linked to these "independent dimensions of black women's activism" (Ngcobozi, 2020, 59) which build networks and communities. This, I argue, is part of the ways in which African women leaders construct

communities within the university space that can make it possible for us to articulate the citizenship of African women in these spaces.

Participant C points to mentorship as a way in which these networks and communities can advance in the academy:

"I think it's difficult to change anything as an individual, and we need to build, you know, networks and communities that create space for us and create space for others and particularly the people who are going to come after us. We need to create those spaces. But I do some very individual things like I mentor young African women, especially at PhD level or just post their PhD."

This further demonstrates what Moodly and Toni (2017) have argued, that the despite the strides made in the transformation trajectories of institutions, women still grapple with breaking the glass ceiling. This is particularly important considering that a study by Breetzke et al. (2020) found that although the intake of black African students is higher than that of whites (in the @2016 report by Statistics South Africa, 66 percent were black African, 19 percent were white, 8 percent were Indian/Asian, and 7 percent Coloured). When juxtaposed with the staff intake, the racial inequalities are exacerbated... black Africans are under-represented at every academic rank at the country's HEIs with the inequalities most pronounced at the professorial rank where 62 percent of professors are white compared with 27 percent for Black African" (Breetzke et al., 2020, 3).

African women who have been narrated and written about as disadvantaged and needing of being saved from whiteness, have demonstrated in various ways that this is not their story, as we see from the literature and the data of this study. Fundamentally, Participant C's mentorship offers a response to this very same narrative. Because through this those who are emerging in the space do not have to be read from being "uniformly disadvantaged, and [can] be able to appreciate their complex ways of being, and their own understandings and definitions of belonging" (Jimlongo, 2021: 33). This is essential in a context where so many narratives exist to which question the readiness of African and black women to occupy the space (Canham 2015).

Participant C suggests another way of thinking about how we build community, because through this access those who will enter the space can know that to inhabit a space like the university, should make one feel that "this is my home. I am not a foreigner. I belong here. This is not hospitality. It

is not charity" (Mbembe, 2016, 30). Ultimately Participant C along with many other African women leaders such as Phakeng (2015) also champion for, is the retainment of emerging and African women academics as this could lead to "the possible lowering of the glass ceiling for even younger potential black African women scholars" (Phakeng, 2015, 2). In building these networks, African women leaders make use of their experiences and their positions to advance and develop social functions and capital (Jean-Marie, 2008) for African women in the academy.

In *Museums and the reshaping of memory*, Davison (1998), argues that museums offer us an institutionalized form of memory which become public memory, this of course includes an act of inclusion and belonging, of whose history counts and whose doesn't. What Davison further makes us aware of, is how personal memory based on individual experience are not given this sense of authority to be part of official public memory. This making of memory and how we remember is what African women leaders aspire to have their experiences be a part of Participant D in reflecting of the ways in which they wish for their leadership to be tracked, expresses:

"I would like to have women see me as a role model. To see that, you know, so and so from the Eastern Cape from this type of, you know, [place]. Having done all these things that people see themselves in you, they believe that they can also do it. It's not like you were, you grew up overseas so people should think that, you know, you went to the same places like them... You've been to the same places with them."

Central to the idea of citizenship and belonging is the ability to see yourself or your identity, your values reflected in the ethos of the space or community you are supposed citizenship of. Part of the layers of the #FeesMustFall and decolonization student movement of 2015-2017, included this. How we address belonging in a space, being reflected in its knowledge system and identifying yourself in the culture of the space. What Participant D raises here is how the politics of recognition (Mabokela & Magubane 2005) can play a fundamental role in the lives of emerging African women in the academy, especially because still, the "presence of black women in the academy brings discomfort to those who have crafted them out of the biopolitics of knowledge" (Khunou, et al. 2019, 2). The challenge with adopting an institution with a particular ideology, such as the European university, is that you adopt a way of thinking that "disregards other epistemic traditions" (Mbembe, 2016,

32). This is relevant in how such institutions would frame concepts like race and gender.

African gender scholar Oyewumi Oyeronke (1997) in their seminal work *The Invention of Women: Making an African sense of Western gender discourse*, contesting gender as a measurement of power in Africa, argues that Western knowledge relies on the binary-logic and understanding of the body to frame gender. That is to say that because the logic of maleness and femaleness in western logic has understood maleness as powerful and femaleness as not, lesser than, that tradition of thinking has been transported to the African continent. That is not to say that gender does not exist on the African continent, however Oyeronke explains that pre-colonial Africa through a reading of the Yoruba language uses other lenses to establish power relations, such as seniority and lineage and not necessary, if ever, gender.

This framing of gender, as a power metric, has led to the exclusion of women in the academy and more importantly the value of African women and their knowledge sets in building the various cannons of knowledge. And what this western patriarchy has done is to effectively, place African women outside the margins of the politics of memory, as well as historical knowledge and consciousness thus making sites such as the university, spaces that belong and should be owned by a particular group (McFadden, 2007).

As argued by Lister (1997) similarly, Participant D is also attempting to shift the very definition of citizenship, because it's not fixed. Participant D challenges us here to use agency in ways that can offer us different kinds of thinking of citizenship, that of thinking of their experience as part of the collective memory of women in the academy. Thus, finding citizenship and community is also about our role in making the university a possible museum for African women in the academy, as "collections are complex...as well as [reveal] fragments of former social milieux" (Davison, 1998, 146). However, these museums will carry these collections as complex as they are and will offer emerging African women scholars a home and sense of belonging, knowing that as Participant D says, You've been to the same places with them.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to highlights the lived experiences of African women in navigating the higher education landscape, with its history and particularly as they form part of its future. Through the cases of five

African women leaders in South African universities, the article reflects on how citizenship and belonging are navigated through the mapping of their leadership endeavours. A careful examination of the African women leaders in this study reveals that despite the factors that influence their lived experience and their current institutional locations, the value of belonging is central to how individuals build the collectives, community and citizenships. The postapartheid and transformation discourses are grappling with the questions of which history ought to be reflected and how, these African women leaders are working, explicitly to make history. This making of history includes the complicated and often not considered to be knowledge, that of centering their experiences. However, through the reliance of the true embodiment of who they are and what colonialism and apartheid has suggested they are or not (in the university space). Because as Slattery (2000:212) reminds us, "to abandon the body is to abandon one's history and one's biography". This article fundamentally exposes the complication inherent in how the history of being as African, black and women in a university whose culture inherently rejects their existence. More so, it shows the ways in which African women are determined to change these institutional cultures for the future of the academic community.

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