"Don’t Talk Like A European”: An Autoethnography Exploring Past and Current Students’ Visions on How to Decolonize Higher Education in South Africa

Ajetha Nadanasabesan

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“Don’t Talk Like A European”:
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Abstract:

Colonial structures persist in the South African higher education system, which perpetuates Eurocentric knowledge as a superior way of knowing. There has been a call to action by South African university students to decolonize the oppressive structures within the higher education system. This project examines how both former and current South African university students envision a decolonized higher education system. Furthermore, it gives insight into how a colonized education has impacted students personally. Additionally, the autoethnographic form of this project integrates the researcher’s relationship to colonized education systems as a way to connect self, other, and culture in a more authentic way. This inquiry utilizes interviews, poetry, self-reflection, and a wide range of literature to explore possibilities for creating a decolonized higher education system in South Africa. Ultimately, this project aims to raise individual’s critical consciousness on how to the plant seeds that can stimulate progress working towards a more inclusive education system for the future.
**Terminology to Know:**

In order to make this paper more accessible below are definitions of some frequently used terms and their application to this project:

**Colonization:**

Colonization refers to settling within another cultural community through thought, action, beliefs, and practices. It also refers to the establishment of Western ideology in non-western locations. It should be noted that colonization “is a form of domination---the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behavior of other individuals or groups” (Horvath, 1972, 46). Colonization impacts multiple institutions throughout society, but this paper focuses specifically on how it has impacted the institution of higher education in South Africa.

**Decolonization:**

Decolonization is the undoing of colonialism by advancing the interest of the colonized rather than Eurocentric interests (Evans, 2016, n.p.). Decolonizing the education system in South Africa involves “ending the domination of Western [knowledge] traditions, histories, and figures” (Molefe, 2016, 32).

**Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS):**

Indigenous Knowledge Systems, “[are] a complete knowledge system with its own concepts of epistemology, philosophy and scientific and logical validity...[which] can only be learned and understood by means of pedagogy traditionally employed by these people themselves” (Battiste & Henderson-Youngblood, 2000 in Hays, 2009, 195). IKS continues to be an essential factor to the survival and welfare of many South Africans.
Chapter 1-Roots

“Don’t Talk Like a European”

Ajetha,
“Don’t talk like a European.”
Mama’s joking words confronted me
Made my mind dig up my roots,
And compare them to my exterior.
I was drowned in awareness,
Awareness of the people that came before me,
Of the people that broke their backs,
The people who compromised their native tongue,
Just so I could speak the language of their oppressor?

(Nadanasabesan, 2017)
Grey Areas:

I walk alone to the back of Skyzers Café. I take note of the sea of people taking a deserving break from the hyper consciousness of everyday life by sipping on their drinks and rejoicing in friendship. The music begins to hush the further back I walk and for the first time all night I can actually hear my own thoughts. It is almost like the combination of rambunctious music, roaring laughter, and carefree dancing that fills a space also has the ability to mute our consciousness: something that we as humans have labeled as “having fun.” I look up and notice one of the Mamas that works at the bar as a chef, noticing me heading for the bathroom. She warmly says to me, “baby there is toilet paper over there for you don’t forget it.” I smile and thank her genuinely and immediately am overcome with how people take care of one another here. I grab the toilet paper and head into the stall when all of a sudden, I hear a wild knock and a voice fill the room, but this person’s giddy energy is what really confronts me. She is telling me to hurry up because she really has to pee, an overwhelming feeling that all humans can relate to. I open the door and she says, “oh goodness thank you baby girl.” She hops on the toilet, door wide open and starts peeing. I smile and start to wash my hands as she starts to make conversation with me. We exchange several compliments about our appearance and start giggling about how wearing the right shade of lipstick makes us feel powerful. I am overwhelmed with the feeling of how special of a place the women’s bathroom is. A place filled with love and support. I decide to tell her how incredible it is that so much new friendship is born the women’s bathroom. She entertains the thought without questioning me and I feel even more supported. She already knows I’m from the United States and begins to tell me a story of how she ended up at this bar. Her friend told her they were coming to Skyzers and she said when she heard where it was she knew it was in the “ghetto.” But then when she saw “us” and our group, especially the white people, she was affirmed that this was a “proper place.” The weight of my American identity almost threw me to the ground in that moment. I have been living in Masxha for almost two months and have found so much beauty is every aspect of the community. Her words pierced me because I realized that our presence taints this beauty. Abruptly, this giggly girl looked at me and said “I love your accent. I’ve been trying to speak British or American English for so long now.” Despite this incredibly kind interaction my heart became heavy. I was missing the harmless compliments about my lipstick. The only response I could think of to this giggly girl was, “your voice is beautiful don’t forget it.” This moment reminded me how formative the grey
areas of life can be. It was not the center of the dance floor that I am left to reflect on. It was the moment in the back. In the bathroom. In the place that no one was looking.
While I’ll remember the vastness of the Drakensburg and the surrealness of Kruger Park, I have been confronted most by the hidden moments, like the ones described in the pieces above. Moments like these, ones that live in the grey areas of life, are embedded in my soul from my time in South Africa. The grey areas that I am describing are the subtle parts of life that occur when no one is watching. They do not emerge at the dinner table of a holiday family meal, but instead exist in the conversation while washing the dishes afterwards. While these moments are seemingly not glamorous, they create communal spaces to reflect developing profound connections between individuals who occupy these areas together. Carl Leggo connects these moments to how we see light: it is not always about recognizing the visible light but also the invisible places that “the light comes from, the places the light goes” (Leggo, 1999, 174). By basking in these grey areas, I have been able to reflect on ideas the way Leggo urges us to look at light, in a way that forces us to take a leap and look beyond our own paradigms. This conscious leap into these hidden moments have allowed this project to be nurtured from its roots all the way to dispersing seeds again.

This autoethnography is divided into three distinct chapters: roots, fruits, and seeds. Roots, the chapter you are currently engaging with, has several layers that are all interconnected. The first layer is exploring the roots of this project and how it emerged. The next layer is exploring how my own identity plays a role in making this project emerge because of my roots in Sri Lanka, a country that was colonized, and how my parents sacrificed everything to give us the opportunity to pursue education. The last layer is weaving in the roots of how higher education came to be colonized in South Africa. Fruit, is about what is blossoming right now, both the ripe and the rotten. The chapter explores individual’s perceptions of how their education was colonized and how this has impacted them. It also seeks to connect these narratives to the current call by university students to decolonize higher education and make it significantly more affordable. Seeds is about planting new ideas in order to stimulate progress for the future. This section aims to explore how students envision a decolonized higher education system to look like. Although these seeds may take time to sprout, this project seeks to raise consciousness on how to decolonize higher education in order to begin planting them.

The topic of this study emerged from a place of self-reflection of how my own education has been colonized. My time in Durban has made me exceedingly more critical of how exclusive academic language can be. Living in a Zulu neighborhood with my host family I became
conscious of how I was having the same level of intellectually fulfilling conversation I would back home, but I was just using different language to engage. My education has forced me to internalize that academic language equates to intellect, and I have been questioning how my own positionality in higher education perpetuates a Eurocentric way of knowing. The poem “Don’t Speak Like A European” illustrates an internally conflicting moment that affirmed the importance of me pursuing the topic of decolonization of higher education in South Africa. The poem speaks to a moment where I was interviewing my host Mama for an assignment on Alcohol Use in Cato Manor, that was helping us prepare for the project you are reading right now. I asked her if she thought people drank responsibly or irresponsibly in Cato Manor. She looked at me confused and then replied jokingly, “Ajetha, don’t talk like a European” (Mama Nokuthula, pers. comm., 23 September 2017). I could not tell if I wanted to scream or rip my mouth out and never speak again, but her whimsical laugh assured me she just wanted me to rephrase the question. So that is what I did, despite feeling shame in hearing my own colonized voice. Her words pierced me in delicately. In a way that made me dig up my own roots and realize how they are inextricably linked to the roots of this project:

I have always believed that education is transformative: education is liberation. Since I was young I have internalized education to be core to my identity. I see how powerful of a force education is through the narratives of my parents. Education allowed my Amma and Appa\(^1\) to trade in poverty and civil war in their villages in Sri Lanka for a successful life in the United States. However, courageously taking this leap involved leaving behind family, friends, property, culture, and comfort. As I grew up, I realized that taking this leap was not about themselves: it was about us, about my sister and I, about creating more for future generations. I am aware that I am describing my own standard immigrant family story of how my parents sacrificed everything in order to create a better life for their children. However, sometimes we are quick to generalize and intellectualize narratives where they cannot empathize instead of engaging with the grey areas of those narratives. If one looked intimately at my parents’ story they would quickly learn how my dad worked two jobs as a full-time engineering student at Northeastern University and would occasionally spend the night sleeping in the student lounge after his shifts until class. They would also learn how my mom spent time in a refugee camp during the Sri Lankan civil

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\(^1\) In Tamil, Amma means mother and Appa means father.
war with tents being bombed next to her and now is a biomedical engineer and incredibly selfless mother. My parents sacrificed a lot so that they could allow us to pursue whatever education we wanted in order to be liberated and independent. These sacrifices have made education an integral part of who I am and I am dedicated to being a lifelong learner. The narratives of my parents and education have been formative in helping me reconcile my dynamic identity as a Sri Lankan American woman. This journey involved some self-rejection but has led me to unapologetic self-love for all my identities. However, this journey to self-love is not always linear and I still frequently question how my conflicting identities can coexist.

Despite my continual love for learning, it was not until I pursued higher education at The George Washington University that I began questioning my philosophy of education as liberation. I started to grapple with how the education system I was supporting could be exclusive and oppressive. As a student of color, I have also felt the impacts of this oppressive system directly. I once had a professor repeatedly assume my identity by trying to force me to write a paper on a trilogy of Indian films. Almost every class I noticed myself cringing and hiding as I waited for him to publicly bring attention to my race. It felt like every time I made a comment he would ignore my insight and only wrongly comment on the fact that I was “Indian.” It got to the point where other students in class would look back at me and ask why he was doing this. When I finally told him, in a manner that was way too polite, that I was Sri Lankan he responded by saying that he knew a Sri Lankan man once and that I might know him. Because we all know each other, right? Experiences like this can be traumatizing and they happen far too often. While I have felt the impacts of the oppressive nature of the education system I do recognize that Black students are the most impacted by this oppression. Throughout this project, I work to never equate the oppression I have faced as a South Asian student to Black students. Instead I work to explore the balance between how colonization has impacted me while simultaneously critiquing how my own colonized voice contributes to the exclusivity of the higher education system. When I came to South Africa I began questioning how my own voice was colonized even more because of the conversations I was having. Due to this self-reflection, I became drawn to how colonization came to exist in the South African higher education system.

Before examining the colonization of the South African higher education system, it is important to look at how the existence of indigenous African learning centers, like Timbuktu, were flourishing before colonization. “African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) have
existed for thousands of years” (Osman, 2009, 1). For example, Timbuktu was founded in the 5th century; however, the economic and cultural height came about during the 15th and 16th centuries. Timbuktu, “was an important centre for the diffusion of Islamic culture with the University of Sankore, with 180 Koranic schools and 25,000” (UNESCO, 1988, n.p.). While resources such as gold were one of Timbuktu’s common export one of its most important export was its books. This learning center was unique because most of the teaching occurred more informally in the homes of scholars (Jarus, 2013, n.p.). This exemplifies how indigenous knowledge centers were doing well in educating Africans; however, the decline of this center came with the rise of colonization. I was hesitant to use this example of Timbuktu in a paper that focuses on South Africa because I did not want to generalize the entire continent. However, I feel like it speaks to a large theme of how indigenous knowledge was celebrated and dispersed in Africa before colonization occurred.

The colonization of higher education in South Africa was not a result of apartheid, but rather these problems started with the establishment of universities by British colonists (Heleta, 2016, 2). Aside from the exploitation of resources of colonized countries, colonists also held the belief that they had a paternal duty to the people they were colonizing (Bain, 2003). In South Africa, colonial universities were established by elite settlers with the belief that the colonialists “were superior human beings on a mission to save and civilize the uncivilized people in the colonies” (Mudimbe, 1985 in Heleta, 2016, 2). Colonialism in South Africa brought a new way of thinking where things that were deemed “good” were measured in European terms. Therefore, one of the most destructive impacts of colonialism was the “subjugation of local knowledge and promotion of Western knowledge as the universal knowledge” (Heleta, 2016, 2). The promotion of Western knowledge as superior perpetuated epistemic violence against Black South African individuals. This type of violence can be seen as many European scholars have worked to erase the intellectual and cultural contributions of Africa and other parts of the non-Western world (Heleta, 2016, 3). They have not only erased African voices, but have also painted them in colonized texts as beasts, which exemplifies how colonized education has demonized the other (Césaire, 2000, n.p.). The creation of the other as a beast demonstrates how oppressive a colonized education can be by misrepresenting the identities of marginalized individuals.

The creation of the apartheid system in 1948 allowed the epistemic violence at universities to persist is more explicit ways. This started when the Bantu Education Act of 1953 made it so “all
of the education in South Africa was officially divided along racial and ethnic lines to reinforce the dominance of white rule” (Iya, 2001, 357). This act institutionalized racism within the education system by excluding Black people from getting any quality academic education or technical training. In 1959, the extension of the University Education Act established racially biased universities, which applied this white supremacy and colonial ideology to higher education (Iya, 2001, 358). Universities not only restricted entry of Black students, but also if a Black student was admitted they needed to provide “ministerial permits certifying that no equivalent programs were offered at Black universities” (Iya, 2001, 358). These oppressive policies created clear divides and perpetuated the notion that the Eurocentric way of knowing was superior. The election of the democratic government in 1994 intended to restructure the system of higher education in order to achieve the goals of democracy. However, in 2008 the Department of Education concluded that “the transformation efforts have not translated into any significant shifts in the structure and content of the curriculum” (Heleta, 2016, 3).

Furthermore, self-reflection has become active and constant in my time in South Africa, and this consciousness made several moments in everyday conversation confront me profoundly. One friend shared with me how in learning English he developed a British accent, and how this troubled him (Bhuti 1, pers. comm., 15 September 2017). It troubles me too. It troubles me that we are told that knowing British English is a symbol of empowerment. But at what cost? Is real empowerment cutting off your own native tongue only to replace it with that of your oppressor? Or is this just an illusion we have been constructed to believe. Similarly, in the piece “Grey Areas,” I was uncomfortable by the giddy girl’s compliment of my accent and how she strived to talk like me. It sits uncomfortably with me that colonization has made it so that the way in which we speak English is indicative of power. It also left me pondering the discrepancy between the sound of my voice and the roots that gave me the melanin in my skin.

These unpredictable yet authentic conversations with people I have come to develop intimate relationships with, are the backbone of this study. My main form of data collection was interviewing six Black South African individuals who were either past or current university students in order to build on previous conversations I had with these same individuals. I initially recorded these interviews, but quickly learned that the recording device dictated the authenticity of our conversation. After the third interview, I switched to taking handwritten notes on notable quotes and thoughts of the interview and quickly found the natural and reciprocal conversation I
was seeking. Throughout this project, I do not disclose the names of interviewees in order to protect the anonymity of my participants. I have labeled them as “Bhuti” and “Sisi,” which means brother and sister in Zulu, as a way to symbolize the close nature of our relationships. These interviewees were recruited because of prior relationships and conversations about the topic with the researcher. I am aware that having previous relationships with interviewees introduces a unique power dynamic to the researcher-subject relationship. I ensured, while obtaining informed consent prior to each interview, that the individuals understood that their refusal to participate in any part of the study would not change their existing relationship with the researcher in any way. Furthermore, I recognize that the topic of decolonization of higher education is a potentially triggering because it can bring up how individuals have been personally impacted by colonization. This is why I thought it was important to interview individuals where a relationship of trust has already been established. Additionally, by growing previous conversations with people that I have developed trust with our interviews felt productive in exploring my research question of how to decolonize higher education in South Africa. The reason I chose to explore this question specifically was because I believe when thinking about social change it is easy to fixate on the problems rather than focus on solutions. This project examines both the actionable steps for progress through decolonization while also addressing the current issues with colonization in the South African higher education system. While I would have liked to interview more individuals, the limited time and scheduling conflicts did not permit me to do so. Additionally, I intended to interview a current academic on the issue of decolonization of higher education because I thought it was important to get the perspective of someone who works and understands the system intimately. However, despite several attempts to contact individuals this interview did not occur. I think there is value in this study only focusing on the voices of past and current university students and I am thankful for the fullness of the conversations I was able to have.

My time in South Africa and this project has reaffirmed my belief in how good conversation can energize the soul. Exchanging thoughts with another individual is so special because it takes trust and vulnerability to be willing to share parts of yourself this way. Furthermore, simple conversation is an important way to create change, “if many more of us step forward, let go of our judgments, become curious about each other, and take the risk to begin a conversation” (Wheatley, 2002, n.p.). I shaped these interviews in the form of conversation as a
A way to gain more authentic insight and dismantle the research subject power dynamic. Carl Leggo describes how “we are connected. So much research seeks to pass around that connectedness,” but by building on previous conversations through my interviews I feel like I was able to nurture this connectedness (Leggo, 1999, 180).

Since the act of self-reflection allowed this project to emerge it felt authentic that the study naturally took the form of an autoethnography. The autoethnography is a post-modernist approach to research and writing that “that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis, 2011, 273). The autoethnographic approach has allowed me to engage with self, other, and cultural structures in terms of decolonizing higher education, in a way that is interconnected rather than segmented. Furthermore, I have been challenged by the irony of how me being a student from the United States doing research in South Africa is contributing to the colonized system of education, despite the topic of decolonization. However, scholars have discussed how the autoethnographic approach can be a “decolonizing tool that can be applied to research,” because of how it increases empathy, reflexivity, and openness to change (Burdell & Swadener, 1999, 140).

Burdell and Swadener’s insight affirmed that the approach I am taking aligns not only with the topic of my project, but also with the type of learner I am striving to be.

Furthermore, the autoethnographic approach has allowed me to use poetry as a method of inquiry. Throughout this process, “poetry has empowered me to lean into the incompleteness of my thoughts in order to gain a greater meaning in my experiences” (Nadanasabesan, 2017, 2). Leaning into this incompleteness has made me content with my research beginning “in a place of unknowing, with a leap of faith, a courageous willingness to embark on a journey” (Leggo, 1999, 180). This place of unknowing has made me open to observing how colonized our minds are in a more natural way. Additionally, poetry has also been attributed as a decolonized method of inquiry because it constructs pathways to knowledge that are different than traditional Western systems of education (Burns, 2004, 216). Similarly, Carl Leggo argues that “research as poetic rumination is scholarly writing, even though it might not always look or sound like the scholarly writing that fills academic journals” (Leggo, 199, 176). Poetry has forced me engage with a form writing that does require academic language in order to be labeled as worthy. In this way poetry has helped me decolonize my voice and thoughts and express them in a way that feels liberating.
Chapter 2-Fruit

Small

The existentialist in me
Finds peace in our smallness.
We are all specks:
Grasping for purpose
Grasping for meaning.

I am reminded of the beauty of this smallness,
In the infiniteness of the mountains,

When the center of the world:
Is far beyond ourselves.

But I’ve come to notice,
That smallness is dynamic.
And the way mother earth makes us feel small
Is gentle in nature.

However, there are violent systems,
That make us feel small in a very different way.

In a way that has made my Black brothers and sisters,
Sit in a classroom and wonder why
They must memorize the life of Anne Frank
But not learn the story of King Shaka?

This system shrinks voices,
By making whiteness big.
It says there is empowerment
In talking like the people
Who exploited the beauty of your country
But refuse to see the beauty of your people.

Perhaps we can find collective liberation,
And ripen the rotten fruit of the time
By going back to the roots,
And reclaiming beauty in the knowledge
That has been buried there.

Maybe then we can leave smallness,
To only be felt in the mountains.

Ajetha Nadanasabesan
The poem “Small” was inspired by several experiences that all came together and felt connected. The beginning of the poem speaks to how feeling cosmically small is calming to me because I am reminded that there are parts of this universe much larger than myself. A couple weeks before coming to South Africa I was hiking in Shenandoah National Park and the vastness of the mountains overwhelmed me with a feeling of smallness. There was comfort in this smallness because it felt like my problems shrunk with me. Feeling this small made the air feel big and I felt like I could really breathe. I was reminded of this incredible moment in one of the early days of my program in South Africa. We were sitting in Marloth Park and my professor asked us the question “what brings you to this program?” The first thing I wrote on the page was “I wanted to feel small because often the spaces we inhabit we feel at the center. This makes an enlarged sense of self that I wanted to challenge” (Nadanasabesan, 4 September 2017). As I look back on this entry I notice that I circled the words “sense of self” and I am not entirely sure why. I think it may be because finding ways to feel small, whether it be in the mountains or traveling to a new place challenges our sense of self, and I wanted to remember that.

However, pursuing this project has prompted me to return to the concept of smallness in a very different way, which relates to the second half of “Small.” As I began engaging in interviews there was a reoccurring theme of how colonization has made Black students identities small. The moment in the poem discussing Anne Frank and King Shaka comes directly from the experience of one of my interviewees. He discussed how it angers him that he was required to spend months learning about the life of Anne Frank, but never once was given a test on the Zulu King Shaka. However, his anger took more the form of disappointment as he discussed how he only learned about Western and European history but nothing about Zulu history, art or culture (Bhuti 2, Interview, 22 November 2017). As we conversed I could only validate his feelings of anger and disappointment in the fact that his identity as a Zulu man was erased in the classroom. The smallness he was describing was filled with discomfort and was far from the peace that I felt in the Shenandoah mountains.

Each time I asked an interviewee the question of whether they felt like their own identity was portrayed in their higher education I felt like I was hearing a new way that colonization made them feel small. However, it was one particular moment in an interview that I will continue to ruminate on. I was interviewing a young woman who is currently studying at Skyy Aviation
Academy. She responded to my question on identity by saying “No Ajetha, our education is all about being more like western cultures” (Sisi 1, Interview, 12 November 2017). In order to give further explanation, she began to share on how in aviation they have a module on “grooming.” Quickly, the way that colonization impacted this lesson emerged, as she stated: “I cannot have my African hair. I cannot have braids. The maize braids. Like the ones I have in. I can’t have that” (Sisi 1, Interview, 12 November 2017). I was shocked and unsettled as she pointed to her own beautiful black and brown braids. “Hair arrangement is a [historically significant] mode of African art,” so why are students being told to reject this part of their culture? (Sieber & Herreman, 2000, 55). She continued to speak words that echoed with pain “we are taught that African is not beautiful. We need to mend a few things for it to be beautiful. You either look like Western people or you are not going to be employed” (Sisi 1, Interview, 12 November 2017). Her words inspired the lines on beauty in the poem “Small” and caused my thoughts to spiral in several different directions. Clearly, the current curriculum does not focus on teaching students ways to move the African continent forward, but instead forces them to remain reliant on Western knowledge in order to succeed within colonized structures (Gqola, 2008, 210). This rhetoric has restricted South African students from envisioning how their continent can progress forward, and instead traps them into thinking they must conform to Western standards in order to succeed or be employed.

Furthermore, her insight speaks to how the colonization of education not only impacts what students are leaning but also how they perceive themselves. This was interesting because in a separate interview we discussed how higher education could be empowering. The interviewee talked about how higher education helped her achieve independence and love herself because it raised her self-esteem (Sisi 2, Interview, 15 November 2017). These conflicting statements between the two interviewees made me reflect on how multi-layered this issue is. Their statements reaffirmed my philosophy that there is liberation in education. However, the system that education exists in can be so oppressive that it has the ability to even make students question their own beauty. The exclusive nature of this system does not nurture the liberating aspects of education unless you are willing to act more like Western people. Steve Biko’s philosophy speaks to how the Black mind has been colonized to believe that they are inferior unless they act more like their oppressors (Daniels, 2013, n.p.). Colonization creates a vicious cycle of
oppression where an illusion of empowerment forces marginalized individuals to contribute to a colonized system in order to “succeed” but in turn just further perpetuates an oppressive system.

The journey of this project has left me reflecting on how my own mind has been colonized as well. I have internalized that since my brown skin does not prove my Americanness, I need to speak and write like an American in order to be successful. I have been taught to enlarge my American identity in every way I can in order to distract from the color of my skin. My mind has been colonized to believe that even one of my identities is superior to the other, and I am constantly questioning if these identities can ever coexist? However, in learning how to decolonize my own mind I have come adore my Sri Lankan identity. I have found magic and power in the culture and melanin that runs through my blood.

Reflecting on language has played an integral role in allowing me to explore how my mind has been colonized, and nearly each interview I conducted also brought up the role of language in the colonization of higher education. When responding to my question of how colonization impacts students one interviewee stated, “It impacts a lot girls. Girls don’t want to speak Zulu anymore. They feel like they should be speaking English. Not just English, but English with the American accent or European accent” (Sisi 1, Interview, 12 November 2017). Again, I immediately became aware of my own voice. I flashed back to all the moments while living in South Africa that someone complimented my accent. I remembered the giddy girl in the Skyzers bathroom and how she strived to speak like me despite her voice being melodic. I even remembered the moment back home in the United States when the old white lady in the nail salon ruined our pleasant conversation by telling me “I speak English very good.” Every part of me wanted to look and her and say, “I actually speak it very well,” but I restrained, smiled, and politely told her that English was actually my first language.

Similarly, in a separate interview we were discussing different ways colonization is visible in higher education and he spoke about the way that students are constructed to believe that the way they speak English is important. He proceeded to talk about how he always been offended when professors complimented him on how well he spoke English (Bhuti 3, Interview, 22 November 2017). I responded by sharing the story of the lady from the nail salon that I had been reminded of because of the other interview. It was interesting to me that we were able to laugh over the ways that we have endured micro-aggressions. It made me realize that when discussing issues of social change while it is valid to be serious and angry all the time, that can
sometimes be unsustainable. This moment showed me how humor can be a powerful tool in intellectualizing oppression in a less painful way. Furthermore, in another interview, language and colonization were linked as he was troubled that kids were losing their native tongue of Zulu. He described how since higher education in South Africa places such an importance on English children are losing their ability to speak Zulu. He shared a story of a Zulu child who does not know how to speak any Zulu, and “how if you closed your eyes you’d think you were talking to a little white kid” (Bhuti 2, Interview, 22 November 2017). This illustrates how the colonization of higher education impacts students much earlier than when they attend university. If children are being told that they should be striving for university to be successful and the only way to be successful there is by speaking English of course they are going to focus more on English. However, this also indicates how the loss of culture and language is another implication of the colonization of higher education.

Despite most of the interviews including insight about how their education has been colonized there was one interviewee who felt like her higher education was not colonized. This conversation added an interesting layer to this project and forced me consider privilege in a new way. This individual attended a private college called Rose Band College and discussed how she did not feel like her education has been colonized, which surprised me. Initially, I felt myself disappointed that her paradigm did not fit into the vision of my project. I was angry at myself for feeling this disappointment because I realized that I was valuing my own work more than the brilliant thoughts of the people I was talking too. After this moment of internal conflict, I tried to listen more actively and be open to the insight she was providing me. Then there was a pivotal moment where she was describing why she felt like education was not colonized when she stated “I guess we had the privilege to take classes in whatever [language], Xhosa, Afrikaans, Zulu. We pay more money so we can get whatever service we require” (Sisi 2, Interview, 15 November 2017). We got into a compelling conversation about how having a decolonized education should not be a privilege it just should be how things are. This individual agreed that you should not have to pay more in order to get the support you need at university. This triggered several thoughts within myself on how privilege plays a role in conversations about decolonizing structures. I realized that in pursuing this topic, I had to be coming from a certain place of privilege. Attending university has provided me with access to spaces and resources to discuss social justice issues, like decolonization, and has also given me the terminology to talk about
these issues. However, I am forced to grapple with how marginalized individuals who are the most impacted by colonization have not been given the same access to resources or spaces to have these conversations because of the cyclical nature of the system. This cycle is how oppressive structures trap individuals by not giving the tools to realize they are being oppressed. Exploring the intersections of privilege, accessibility, and social justice has forced me to question the value of my own project.

Prior to the pursuit of this project, the words of spoken word poet Alok Vaid-Menon deterred me from ever wanting to pursue research:

What is the point of a thesis written in a language inaccessible by the very people it is about. What is the point of a thesis and researcher who is familiar of the names of theories but not actually the names of their own neighbor. Who is invited to speak about a movement and who must die for it (Vaid-Menon, 2013).

However, after learning about the autoethnographic approach to research and coming to the topic of decolonization of higher education I saw a unique opportunity arise. This opportunity involved challenging myself to work against the colonized aspects of research. Although I knew this would be a contradictory journey, Vaid-Menon’s words still haunt me as I question if I have succeeded in challenging the colonized aspects of research. They speak to how research intellectualizes individuals lived experiences and explores how this is still the result of the exclusivity of academia. Menon’s powerful words influenced the intentionality of how I wanted to conduct this project. I found it important to live in Masxha\(^2\) amongst the people I would be talking to. However, living there was much more important than just the interviews I was conducting. Building a sense of place in the community allowed the grey areas of life to become crucial to the coherence of this project. I found coherence not only in the interviews I was having but also in the connections I was building with my neighbors and my host family. Despite remaining unsettled in pursuing this project because of Menon’s insightful commentary on the exclusivity of research, I have come to reconcile certain aspects of my research. In criticizing how I contribute to the colonization of higher education, simply by writing this paper, I have become open to other pathways to knowledge. It has made me see the academic value of the autoethnographic approach and arts based inquiry as I have begun to explore self-criticism as a part of the academic process. Furthermore, I have been able to question my own activism back home and how partaking in

\(^2\) Masxha is a Zulu neighborhood within Cato Manor in Durban where I lived with a host family for two months and for most of this project.
protests and activism also requires a certain level of privilege. Protests often involve using the language of the oppressor in order to get a point across. Therefore, even in trying to rise against an oppressive system you have to speak the language of the system in order to be heard.

Recently student protests in South Africa, that have been calling for a decolonized Afrocentric higher education, have been on the rise. The movement to decolonize higher education exists as part of the larger struggle to end Western colonial structures in South Africa (BusinessTech, 2016). One of the most prominent movements associated with decolonizing higher education is known as the “Fees Must Fall” movement. “Fees Must Fall” focuses on making access to higher education free, and if not free, definitely more affordable (Heleta, 2016). The “Fees Must Fall” movement was sparked because of the proposed tuition increase of 10% and 12%. Students claimed that these fee hikes were discriminatory because of the large income gap between Black families and White families in South Africa (Heleta, 2016). This is significant because in all six of my interviews individuals cited financial inaccessibility as a way that higher education can be disempowering: “Fees Must Fall as a movement and people were just going crazy. If given the opportunity I would go on and on studying a million times. I would love to do that but obviously because of the funds I am disempowered in a way” (Sisi 2, Interview, 15 November 2017). The financial burden of higher education can also trap individuals in poverty instead of empowering of them. Another interviewee shared with me how higher education can be disempowering because people do not have the ability to go to school, but even if they do go to school they are paying off a lot of loans. He questions the impacts of higher education because he sees well established engineers still living in poverty in Cato Manor and riding the mini bus to work (Bhuti 2, Interview, 22 November 2017). Individuals’ rising consciousness of how higher education can be financially oppressive makes sense why the “Fees Must Fall” movement rose.

People associate the start of the movement to decolonize higher education in South Africa with an incident at the University of Cape Town, where a politics student emptied a bucket of excrement over the statue of British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes (Heleta, 2016). However, it should be noted that university protests did not start suddenly in 2015 with the “Fees Must Fall” movement in the Western Cape. In fact, students at poorer Black institutions, such as the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and Fort Hare University, have been protesting the fees and structure of higher education since 1994 (Davids and Waghid, 2016). Several of these protests
have become violent with students torching police vehicles, which demonstrates how serious students feel about decolonizing higher education. Aside from lowering fees, the movement grew to push for a decolonized Afrocentric education, which promotes Black liberation by dismantling the education system that inherently oppresses Black people (BusinessTech, 2016). There has been little media attention on protests at historically Black universities, but international solidarity for protests at historically white universities (Davids and Waghid, 2016). This reality exemplifies the need to find visibility for students at Black universities in order for the movement to prioritize students who have been the most negatively impacted by colonial education.

While there was agreement in the need to decolonize higher education, in discussing the effectiveness of the protests pushing for a decolonized higher education in South Africa there has been mixed opinions. One individual shared how she does not agree with the violent nature of protests but believes it has been an effective way to grasp government attention on this issue. (Sisi 2, Interview, 15 November 2017). In contrast, another student does not agree with the protests and thinks they are invalidating the movement. Instead she thinks it is more important to have formal debates and informal conversations, like the one we were having, in order to raise people’s consciousness on the issue (Sisi 1, Interview, 12 November 2015). However, it was the words of one interviewee that really resonated with me when discussing the Fees Must Fall protest, “we cannot go to school for free if we’re not” (Sisi 3, Interview, 25 November 2015). This was so profound to me because she was speaking to the fact of how Black individuals need to decolonize their minds first to realize that they are worthy and intelligent. This individual’s ideas connect back to Biko and realizing that liberation first starts with decolonizing one’s own mind, which will be discussed further on in this paper (Shongwe, 2016). All of these differing opinions exemplify how the issue of decolonization is complex because it involves dismantling years of colonization. Regardless, it is important to explore ways to plant seeds in order to progress towards liberating South Africa’s colonized systems.
Chapter 3-Seeds

Simple Discomfort

“Micro-progressions not micro-aggressions”
Systematic change is unjustly slow,
But now is the time to plant seeds,
And not just watch them grow.

They need to be nurtured with fertile soil
And tended to every single day,
Through conversation and action,
Both of which can exist in the grey.

Why do I worry that these words and these rhymes,
Are not verbose enough?
Man, decolonizing our minds,
Is really god damn tough.

But sometimes to plant seeds,
The roots are where we need to look,
The knowledge that has been buried there,
Is equally as special as any Western book.

Perhaps in order to achieve freedom,
Reclaiming our own minds is where we must start,
With the words of Biko echoing behind us,
Please join me in this last part.

Ajetha Nadanasabesan
This past summer while attending a community event at The Potter House, one of my favorite bookstores in Washington D.C, a woman I was talking to told me how she wanted to start a hashtag on Twitter: #MicroProgressionsNotMicroAggressions. She proceeded to tell me how she does not use Twitter so I should take it from her and use it. While I did not start a trending hashtag, I did use her words in the poem “Simple Discomfort” because I adored how her phrase encompasses how social change takes time and patience. The event my friend and I was at was titled “Be Humble: A Healing Salon,” and intended to bring together a room full of people to discuss an essay written by the facilitator, Richael Faithful, titled Be Humble. The conversation surrounded the intersection between social justice, our egos, and language. We shared thoughts on how people who are part of social justice movements are quick to exclude individuals who do not have the proper terminology to talk about certain issues and make them “the other.” Furthermore, we talked about while having the correct language is important, it is also frequently a privilege of people who occupy academic spaces. Controlling our egos involves understanding that everyone might not have access to inclusive language, and if we have the emotional capacity to teach them how to be more inclusive we should bring them further into the movement rather than exclude them. This is how we plant and nurture seeds for a more inclusive future.

The poem “Simple Discomfort” is probably the most intentional poem I have ever written. The poems I normally write do not have a rhyming scheme and I find myself wanting them to sound scholarly and profound. I challenged myself to write this last poem with a simple form and tried to use accessible language in an attempt to decolonize my own work. I recognize that I failed in certain ways by talking about concepts like “micro-aggressions” and “systematic change,” that not everyone may be familiar with. After writing this poem I felt so much discomfort with the simplicity of it. I realized that this discomfort stemmed from how my own colonized education has constructed me to believe what intelligence looks like. In reflecting on my feelings of discomfort, I decided to add in the third stanza of the poem in order to be transparent about the process. I thought it was important that I intentionally engage with a decolonized form of writing to open Chapter 3 Seeds before discussing pathways to decolonization of higher education in South Africa.

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3 A hashtag is used on the social media platform Twitter in order describe a key topic or phrase and categorizes them so other users can follow tweets about a specific topic or theme.
Little literature has been written on what is being done to decolonize higher education in South Africa, which indicates that it is an issue that is not getting much attention. In doing research for this project, I quickly recognized the lack of current research on solutions to decolonize higher education in South Africa. I conducted several searches on “decolonizing higher education in South Africa,” “social accountability of higher education in South Africa,” and “promoting academic freedom in South Africa” all of which came up with very little results. However, the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST) policy on indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) introduced in 2004 was “a major step forward in the recognition of the legitimacy of systems of knowledge other than ‘Western’ or ‘scientific’ knowledge, and reflects a growing shift in consciousness among academics [and] policy makers” (Hays, 2009, 196). This policy wanted to develop ways to recognize informal skills in order to bestow the same legitimacy as formal qualifications. This was intended to be carried out by integrating IKS into formal structures and recognizing the importance of informal structures. There are challenges with integrating IKS into the formal education system. For example, in order to fully integrate IKS into the education system it is imperative to use the knowledge of elders. However, “integrating experiential, orally transmitted knowledge--usually held by someone who has little or no formal education,” into a system that values written information and formal qualifications is challenging (Hays, 2009, 196). Furthermore, South Africa’s IKS policy discusses the need to integrate IKS into the education system but does not actually propose how this can be done (Hays, 2009, 202). I chose the topic of this project because of the lack of proposed solutions. It felt worthy to seek out how individuals envisioned a decolonized higher education system to look like because there is often not a focus on solutions to issues. The brilliant thoughts that each individual brought to the interviews left me energized and full of visions for how future progress would look like.

In several of my interviews we discussed different ways to update curriculum in higher education facilities in order promote an indigenous way of knowing. One interviewee was especially inspired and shared with me how she thought there should be courses involving making African attire and art, cooking African food, and learning about the technology of African housing (Sisi 1, Interview, 12 November 2017). She proceeded to talk about how these types of courses will create jobs that perpetuate African culture rather than make people reliant on jobs that promote Western culture. As this was my first interview, I found myself excited that
she had such concrete suggestions for how to decolonize. Another interviewee explained how South Africans are great at storytelling and performance arts. He questioned why there were no courses offered in storytelling of South African history and claimed this would be an authentic look at history rather than exclusively studying the Western world (Bhuti 3, Interview, 22 November 2017). These suggestions were interesting because in my conversation with another interviewee, who did not think her education had been colonized, she claimed that courses offered African art and culture were offered numerously at her university. (Sisi 2, Interview, 15 November 2017). Since this individual attended a private university, it again made me wonder why having decolonized parts of higher education seems to be a privilege. Although, there are departments at public universities that offer courses that promote an indigenous way of knowing they are often very small and underfunded (Osman, 2009, 1). The question then remains how can consciousness in South Africa shift so that indigenous knowledge is viewed as worthy enough to allocate university funding to it? It seems that it is only deemed worthy at private universities when there is extra funding coming in from students’ tuition.

In a separate interview the individual’s main suggestion for how to decolonize higher education in South Africa was to have government funding to theorize African knowledge. He continued to discuss how in order for South Africa to “compete in a global market we need to theorize what we are good at and celebrate it” (Bhuti 3, Interview, 22 November 2017). This individual spoke to how South African’s should not get rid of math and science, but instead find way to teach these things in a way that fits African culture (Bhuti 3, Interview, 22 November 2017). His insight is significant because in several other interviews individuals agreed that it was important not to get rid of Western knowledge, especially math or science, but did not explain why. In using Western knowledge in a way that fits African culture it allows for the support of indigenous knowledge systems. This idea also makes it so Western knowledge is not viewed as superior, but instead working to fit an African system. These claims resonate with Steve Biko’s argument on creating a hybrid identity in the process of decolonization: “we need to keep the good aspects of both the culture of the coloniser and the colonised in this hybrid identity. Humanising pedagogy would include the recognition of knowledge and skills which students can contribute” (Oelofsen, 2015, 144). In this way, we can treat all students as human beings and revere the diverse knowledge that they have to bring to a classroom. This will then harbor relationships built on academic freedom rather than superiority.
In coherence with the running theme of this project, language was brought up as an important way to decolonize higher education in South Africa. One individual was frustrated that students are never required to learn Zulu and they are no courses offered in Zulu despite it being an older language than Afrikaans (Bhuti 2, Interview, 22 November 2017). Another notable remark by an individual in regards to decolonization was that, “role models are important to building South African identities and working to undo colonization…we need teachers and educators that Black South Africans can look up to and communicate with in their own language” (Bhuti 3, Interview, 22 November 2017). This is significant because individuals need to have educators that speak, look, and can empathize with them in order to feel like they are important as students. Employing more Black South African educators in higher education that look and speak like their students is one major way that students can begin to see their own identity portrayed in their education.

Most of my interviewees proposed concrete ideas on how to decolonize higher education in South Africa; however, one interviewee shared a much more theoretical philosophy, which provided a unique perspective on the issue. She did not place importance in updating the curriculum of higher education right away, but instead believed that first, “there is psychological work that needs to be done” with Black people in South Africa” (Sisi 3, Interview, 25 November 2017). She discussed how before anything concrete is changed in the system Black individuals need to decolonize their mind because “the biggest enemy is our own mind.” She explained how the colonization of the Black mind makes it so that Black individuals do not believe in themselves. If Black people believe that they are inferior then even with decolonized courses in different languages they still cannot succeed. She used a beautiful metaphor to describe how the system is keeping Black students’ minds colonized, “they don’t know that they are eagles. The system is pruning their wings. The system finds what makes them soar and chops it” (Sisi 3, Interview, 25 November 2017). I was left in awe of her poetic words. Our entire conversation always circled back to the fact that it does not matter if we decolonize the higher education system if we do not help Black students and people decolonize their own minds to make them aware that they are capable of succeeding. In reflecting on how decolonize the minds of Black individuals, many scholars return to Steven Biko and the theory of Black Consciousness: “The only thing that can liberate black people from self-hate and colonization of their mind is the theory of Black Consciousness” (Shongwe, 2016, n.p.). Black consciousness “was and still is a
struggle for a new consciousness, a reawakening of a self-consciousness, a re-appropriation of Black self-consciousness from the clutches of an appropriative and dominating white consciousness” (More in Azanian People’s Organization, 2008, n.p.). This confronted me because I noticed that I was hyper focused on transforming curriculum and promoting more diverse languages in higher education, but it never occurred to me that this may be a later step in the decolonization process. I am left to wonder whether the reawakening of Black consciousness and decolonizing the mind, although theoretical, is the actual first step in decolonizing higher education in South Africa.

Despite feeling energized by the blossoming ideas of these individuals, I was still confronted with the challenges of integrating their proposed solutions. I return to similar challenges that Hays discussed on implementing the DST policy on indigenous knowledge system. My interviewees had lots of suggestions on how they envisioned a decolonized to look like but little suggestions on how to actually integrate and implement these suggestions. Furthermore, there were no proposed solutions on how to make skills like storytelling and knowledge on the technology of African housing viewed as formal skills in the job market. In exploring these challenges, I realized that there not only needs to be change in higher education but also in employment and hiring criteria. I recognize that this will be difficult to change in South Africa because of the high unemployment rate in the country. However, perhaps if there is a change by giving indigenous knowledge the same recognition as formal Western qualifications there would be more opportunity for employment in the country.

Hearing about the blossoming ideas of these individuals on how they envision a decolonized higher education to look like left me energized thinking about the possibilities for a more inclusive future. However, when I asked individuals if they thought decolonization was possible I was surprised how the inspiration in their voices and turned to cynicism. One interviewee also shared how “decolonization is way too slow in South Africa” and this makes him critical if there will ever be real substantial change (Bhuti 3, Interview, November 22 2017). When he shared this with me I almost reflexively shared with him how I was once told it is about “micro-progressions not micro-aggressions.” He enjoyed the sentiment and we agreed that systematic change is unjustly slow and requires a great deal of patience. However, in reflection I realize that it is a privilege to so easily claim that systematic change is unjustly slow when the oppression within the system is killing marginalized individuals.
Another individual responded to my question by saying that she does not think colonization of higher education will ever change “unless Africans are exposed to being economically free. If they understand they need to be educated, they will start businesses and be able to teach. We will have professors” (Sisi 1, Interview, November 12 2017). This is imperative because it exemplifies how decolonization of higher education does not just involve addressing inequities within the education institution. It also requires addressing larger economic inequities in the country of South Africa, which is one of “the most unequal countries in terms of income distribution—based on the Gini index estimates from the World Bank” (Barr, 2017, n.p.). However, addressing these inequities is a massive on-going problem with no single solution.

This related to another individual’s sentiments that decolonization will never occur because “it is simply too big” (Bhuti 2, Interview, November 22 2017). All of these sentiments left me less optimistic and forced me to question if I think decolonization is possible myself…

Currently, I find myself with no clear answers on how to decolonize higher education in South Africa, but instead am left with more questions: Is colonization too deeply institutionalized in society to be changed? Can we really just decolonize one system, like higher education, or does it require the collective decolonization of all systems? I have been grappling with the latter of the two questions the most because really issues of colonization are all intersectional and impact one another. Therefore, is it unproductive to entertain the idea that higher education can be decolonized without decolonizing other institutions within in South Africa? However, decolonizing all the systems of South Africa becomes a much larger more intimidating issue with even less solutions than just focusing on decolonizing higher education. Furthermore, I now realize that while this study sought to explore visions of solutions rather than problems, actually enacting these solutions are a much more complicated issue. I think it would be impactful if future studies focused not only on proposed solutions on how to decolonize higher education in South Africa, but also how to integrate those solutions into existing structures. I recognize that the limited time of this project also limited the scope of the findings offered. I come to no concrete truth on how to decolonize higher education in South Africa; however, I never expected to. Instead, this project leaves open insight on different curriculum options to promote an indigenous way of knowing, and how it may be more sustainable to create a hybrid identity in the process of decolonization. It also suggests that perhaps decolonization really starts with empowering Black individuals in South Africa to decolonize their own minds. Surprisingly, I
find myself sitting comfortably in the fact that multiple truths have arisen and exist together from this project. Mostly because I find solace in the words of one of my interviewees, “Ajetha, to tell you the truth I never really recognized the fact that the system in which we are taught is so colonized until we started having our conversations” (Sisi 1, Interview, 12 November 2017). This reaffirmed my belief not only in the purpose of my project but also the importance of good conversation. Taking the time to sit down and engage with one another has the power to raise our own consciousness and also make us inextricably connected to one another simply through the exchange of thoughts.

I am now left not only at the end of my project but also at the end of my time here in South Africa; however, the journey feels incomplete. I think this is because I am fixated on how my own journey continues on. As I write these closing words, I sit in the Green Camp Gallery Project in Durban and feel overwhelming authenticity in the space I am occupying. The founder of the space, Xolani, is speaking to my friend Naadiya about what the Green Camp Gallery Project is about and I find myself an onlooker on their conversation. His project intends to recycle and rehabilitate depressed spaces into thriving and stimulating environments. It is also a hub for urban farming and green rehabilitated art and showing people how they can recycle their ideas, heartaches, and challenges to make them useful in life. I hear Xolani’s gentle voice say to Naadiyah that creating this place we were sitting in was about finding “the beauty in broken spaces” and I was immediately overwhelmed with his words (Xolani, pers. comm. 3 December 2017). I realize that in a way the journey of this project was also about finding the beauty in broken spaces. This beauty lives in the formal conversation I was able to have with individuals about stimulating progress in the broken colonized system of South Africa. However, this beauty existed more fiercely in the conversations I had while living in Mashxa that occurred in the grey areas of life. I reluctantly think that this beauty can also live within myself and my own brokenness, especially as I carry what I have learned here with me back home. I hope I can recycle the ideas, heartaches, and challenges from this journey and continue to decolonize my own mind and work. So now as I observe how many physical and metaphorical seeds have been planted in the green space that surrounds me I am overcome with coherence: We need to start planting seeds in the broken spaces.
References:


Primary Sources:


Interviews:

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form For Adult Respondents in English

CONSENT FORM

1. **Brief description of the purpose of this project:**
   I am studying past and current South African university students’ suggestions on how to decolonize higher education. I will be asking your opinions and experiences of colonization in higher education and how it has impacted your education. Additionally, I value your opinions on what a decolonized higher education system would look like.

2. **Rights Notice**
   In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.
   
   a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.

   b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless you choose otherwise.

   c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to you.

I understand that I will receive no gift or direct benefit for participating in the study. I confirm that the learner has given me the address of the nearest School for International Training Study Abroad Office should I wish to go there for information. (404 Cowey Park, Cowey Rd, Durban).
I know that if I have any questions or complaints about this study that I can contact anonymously, if I wish, the Director/s of the SIT South Africa Community Health Program (Zed McGladdery 0846834982 )

_________________________                                 _____________________________
Participant’s name printed                     Your signature and date

_________________________                                 _____________________________
Interviewer’s name printed                     Interviewer’s signature and date
Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Each of my six interviews were vastly different from one another. My first three interviews were more formal where I recorded and transcribed the interviews. However, I felt like the recording device was making the conversation less authentic compared to previous conversations with the same individuals. When I tried an interview without recording device I was amazed at how full, reciprocal and authentic the conversation felt. I decided to continue on this way for the rest of my interviews and proceeded to have positive results by taking handwritten notes on notable quotes and remarks of the interviewee. Despite the different nature of the interviews, the questions listed below guided all six of the conversations:

1. Where do you/did you go to university?
2. What did you study?
3. Are you currently working?
   a. If so, what is your job?
4. In what way can higher education be empowering?
5. In what way can higher education be disempowering?
6. Has your own identity been portrayed in your education?
7. How has colonization been visible in your higher education?
8. Do you feel like the colonization of higher education impacts students?
9. Have you been following the student protests calling to decolonize higher education in South Africa?
   a. If yes, what do you think the protests’ purpose is?
   b. Have they been effective?
10. Do you think there is a way to decolonize higher education?
11. What would a decolonized higher education institution look like?
Appendix 3: Consent to Use of Independent Study Project (ISP)

Access, Use, and Publication of ISP/FSP

Student Name: Ajetha Nadanasabesan

Email Address: ajetha@gwmail.gwu.edu

Title of ISP/FSP: “Don’t Talk Like A European”: An Autoethnography Exploring Past and Current Students’ Visions on How to Decolonize Higher Education in South Africa

Program and Term/Year: SIT Community Health and Social Policy Fall 2017

Student research (Independent Study Project, Field Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, as stipulated in the SIT Policy on Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore copies of ISP/FSPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved.

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Ajetha Nadanasabesan 12/04/17
Student Signature Date
### Appendix 4: LRB Clearance Form

**Human Subjects Review**  
**LRB/IRB ACTION FORM**

| Name of Student: Ajetna Nadarasa | Institution: World Learning Inc.  
| -abesan | IRB organization number: IORG0004408  
| ISP Title: "Don't Talk Like A European: An Autoethnography Exploring Decolonising Higher Education in South Africa" | IRB registration number: IRB00005219  
| Date Submitted: 25 October 2017 | Expires: 9 December 2017  

| Program: Durban Community Health and Social Policy- Fall 2017  
| Date: 9 October 2017  
| Exempt □  
| Exempted □  
| Full □  

**LRB REVIEW BOARD ACTION:**  
- [ ] Approved as submitted  
- [ ] Approved pending changes  
- [ ] Requires full IRB review in Vermont  
- [ ] Disapproved  

LRB Chair Signature:  

Form below for IRB Vermont use only:

**Research requiring full IRB review. ACTION TAKEN:**  
- [ ] approved as submitted  
- [ ] approved pending submission or revisions  
- [ ] disapproved  

IRB Chairperson’s Signature  

Date 9 October 2017