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THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE NORTH, STUDENT POLITICS AND THE NATIONAL UNION OF SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS, 1960-1968

ABSTRACT

The Extension of University Education Act of 1959 forbade future Black enrolment at the racially “open” Universities of Cape Town, the Witwatersrand and Natal and enabled the construction of ethnically differentiated university colleges for Black students. One of these new higher education institutions, the University College of the North (UCON), situated in the former northern Transvaal (today Limpopo), is the subject of this study. This article examines the nature of student politics at the UCON from the date of the university’s inception in 1960 until 1968, when the student body elected to affiliate to the predominantly white, liberal National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). NUSAS actively opposed university apartheid, both before and after its legislation, and was accordingly proscribed at the new Black university colleges. This article argues that UCON student politics were fundamentally shaped by the provisions of the Extension of University Education Act of 1959. Nonetheless, the small founding cohort of UCON students was not the docile and apartheid-conforming subjects hoped for by the state and university authorities. Further, it contends that NUSAS’s engagement with UCON students and Black students at other universities was one of the factors leading to the radicalisation of the organisation during the early to mid-1960s. It demonstrates too that UCON students of the early 1960s had many of the same reservations about NUSAS as the founders of the exclusively Black South African Students Organisation (SASO) later that decade. Finally, it shows that some of the tenets of Black Consciousness thinking of the 1970s are discernible within an earlier generation of UCON students.

Keywords: *University College of the North (UCON); University of the North (UNIN); University of Limpopo; Turfloop; National*

Union of South African Students (NUSAS); student politics; university apartheid; South African Students Organisation (SASO); Black Consciousness; African Students Union of South Africa (ASUSA); African Students Association (ASA)

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustained student protest during 2015/6 brought many South African universities to a standstill for a considerable period, and, for a short time, pushed students to the forefront of South African public life. Driven by concerns of post-colonialism, identity and Fanonian notions of “the revolution betrayed”, students challenged both the post-1994 neoliberal settlement and the non-racial, “rainbow nation” consensus. In so doing, they elicited a renewed interest in student politics, student activism and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). This is a study of student politics at the University College of the North (UCON) – later the University of the North (UNIN) and later still, the University of Limpopo – an apartheid-created institution of higher education situated in Limpopo Province (formerly the northern Transvaal), the student body of which played a founding and leading role in the BCM.

There is an established body of research devoted to the BCM¹ as well as a growing literature concerned with the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO),² the members of which authored much of Black Consciousness thought. The National Union of South African Students

1 N Manganyi, *Being-black-in-the-world* (Johannesburg: Spro Cas, Ravan, 1973); G Gerhart, *Black power in South Africa: The evolution of an ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); S Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa: Political considerations* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982); A Mngxitama et al., *Biko lives! Contesting the legacy of Steve Biko* (New York: Palgrave, 1988); D Mangena, *On your own: Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa/Azania* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1989); B Pityana et al. (eds), *Bounds of possibility: The legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991); T Sono, *Reflections on the origins of Black Consciousness in South Africa* (Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1993); D Magaziner, *The law and the prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968-1977* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010); T More, “The intellectual foundations of the Black Consciousness Movement”. In: P Vale et al. (eds), *Intellectual traditions in South Africa: Ideas, individuals and institutions* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2014); L Hadfield, *Liberation and development: Black Consciousness community programs in South Africa* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2016); I Macqueen, *Black Consciousness and progressive movements under apartheid* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2018).

2 S Badat, *Black student politics, higher education and apartheid: From SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1999); M Maimela, *Black Consciousness and white liberals in South Africa: Paradoxical anti-apartheid politics* (DLitt. et Phil., University of South Africa, 1999); M Mzamane et al., “The Black Consciousness Movement”. In: South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South*

(NUSAS), with which SASO severed ties during the early 1970s, has also been the subject of scholarly attention over the years.³ However, except for Fort Hare,⁴ comparatively fewer works address the student bodies at the Black institutions of higher education⁵ which constituted SASO and the

Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980 (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2006); J Brown, *The road to Soweto: Resistance and the uprising of 16 June 1976* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2016).

- 3 M Legassick, *The National Union of South African Students: Ethnic cleavage and ethnic integration in the universities: Occasional paper Number 4* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1967); M Legassick and J Shingler, "South Africa". In: D Emmerson (ed.), *Students and politics in developing nations* (New York: Frederick A Praeger, 1968); N Curtis and C Keegan, "The aspiration to a just society". In: H van der Merwe and D Welsh (eds.), *Student perspectives on South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1972); B Kline, "The National Union of South African Students: A case-study of the plight of liberalism, 1924-1977", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 23 (1), 1985; Maimela, Black Consciousness and white liberals; C Larkin, *Becoming liberal – a history of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), 1945-1955* (MA, University of Cape Town, 2001); M Legassick and C Saunders, "Aboveground activity in the 1960s". In: South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004); M Legassick, "NUSAS in the 1970s". In: South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*; Brown, *Road to Soweto*; C McKay, *A history of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), 1956-1970* (DLitt. et Phil., University of South Africa, 2015).
- 4 T Beard, "Background to student activities at the University College of Fort Hare". In: Van der Merwe and Welsh (eds.), *Student perspectives on South Africa*; D. Burchell, "The emergence and growth of student militancy at the University College of Fort Hare 1916-1959", *Journal of the University of Durban-Westville*, New Series 3, 1986; D Massey, *Under protest: The rise of student resistance at the University of Fort Hare* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2010); R Chapman, *Student resistance to apartheid at the University of Fort Hare: Freedom now, a degree later* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington, 2016).
- 5 For studies of student politics at the University of Durban-Westville see, A Desai, "Theatre of struggle: Black Consciousness on Salisbury Island", *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 31 (1), 2013; K Hiralal, "Gendered narratives of Salisbury Island", *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 31 (1), 2013.

For studies of student activism at the Universities of the Western Cape and Zululand see respectively CC Thomas, "Disaffection, identity, Black Consciousness and a new rector: An exploratory take on student activism at the University of the Western Cape 1966-1976", *South African Historical Journal* 54 (1), 2005; M Xaba, "My journey, our journey: Activism at Ongoye University". In: A Heffernan and N Nieftagodien (eds.), *Students must rise: Youth struggle in South Africa before and beyond Soweto '76* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016).

A number of institutional histories devote sections to student politics. See, D Williams, *A history of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa: The 1950s: The waiting years* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2001); P Denis and G Duncan, *The native school that caused all the trouble: A history of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2011); V Noble, *A school of struggle – Durban's medical school and the education of black doctors in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2013).

For student activism at Black universities see, M Nkomo, *Student culture and activism in Black South African universities: The roots of resistance* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984).

BCM. Until the publication of Julian Brown's *The road to Soweto* and Anne Heffernan's *Limpopo's legacy*,⁶ academic literature relating to student politics at the UCON/UNIN, or "Turffloop" as it was colloquially known, was notably limited.⁷ Both new works attest to the important contribution of UCON/UNIN student activism to anti-apartheid resistance politics, Brown contending that the "confrontational" and "insurrectionary" nature of the Viva-Frelimo rally at Turffloop in 1974 celebrating the independence of Mozambique "marked a shift in South African politics".⁸ Through an examination of the role played by Turffloop students in the establishment of SASO in the late 1960s, the development and spread of Black Consciousness ideology in the 1970s, the creation of the United Democratic Front-affiliated youth congresses in the 1980s and the reconstitution of the African National Congress Youth League in the 1990s, Heffernan demonstrates that the UCON/UNIN was both a regional and national centre of activism. She charts the increasing confrontation between the Turffloop student body and the university and state authorities in the 1970s and interrogates the conflict between Black Consciousness and "Charterists" loyalists on the campus in the period prior to the military occupation of the university in 1986.⁹

This study attempts to fill some of the many gaps still evident in the literature by examining the ostensibly "quiet period"¹⁰ of Turffloop student politics from the date of the university's inception in 1960 until 1968 when the student body unanimously voted to affiliate to the non-racial, liberal and predominantly white,¹¹ national student organisation, NUSAS. Failure to examine this early period creates the impression that nothing of political significance happened at the UCON during most of the first decade of its existence, and that the dramatic events of the late 1960s and early 70s, and even the establishment of SASO, launched at the university in 1969, were entirely new phenomena and without precedent. This study demonstrates

6 J Brown, *The road to Soweto: Resistance and the uprising of 16 June 1976* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2016); A Heffernan, *Limpopo's legacy: Student politics and democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019).

7 Two studies of institutional change at the UCON/UNIN offer some insights into student life. See, C White, *From despair to hope: The Turffloop experience* (Sovenga: UNIN Press, 1997); A Mawasha, "Turffloop: Where an idea was expressed, hijacked and redeemed". In: M Nkomo et al. (eds.), *Within the realm of possibility: From disadvantage to development at the University of Fort Hare and the University of the North* (Cape Town: HSRP Press, 2006).

8 Brown, *Road to Soweto*, p. 149.

9 Heffernan, *Limpopo's legacy*, pp. 41-51; 74-79; 87-99; 160-169; 179-184; 192-194; 199-205.

10 N Gwala, "State control, student politics and Black universities". In: W Cobbett and R Cohen (eds.), *Popular struggles in South Africa* (London: Africa World Press, 1988), pp. 175-176.

11 This article employs apartheid-era race classification terms, still in official use in post-apartheid South Africa. However, "Black" refers to all those not classified under apartheid as "white", hence, those officially classified as "African", "coloured" and "Indian".

that the small founding cohort of UCON students were neither the docile and conforming subjects hoped for by the apartheid state and university authorities and nor were they disengaged from national political events unfolding outside the campus. Importantly, two exclusively Black student organisations, allied to the banned liberation movements, had a following at the UCON during these early years. During the mid-1960s, UCON adherents of the Pan-Africanist Congress-aligned, ASUSA enunciated views that bore some striking similarities to those of the BCM of the 1970s. This suggests that there was a measure of continuity between the earlier and later periods, which moreover linked the liberation movements to the BCM. It suggests too that Turfloop students of an earlier generation played a formative role in the development of Black Consciousness thought.

Further, it is argued that the nature of Turfloop student politics during this period was fundamentally shaped by university apartheid legislation, the Extension of University and Fort Hare Transfer Acts of 1959. These statutes enabled the construction of ethnically-based university colleges for Black students (the University Colleges of Zululand, the North, the Western Cape and Durban-Westville), permitted the state-expropriation of the hitherto multi-racial, missionary-created Fort Hare University and its transformation into a Christian-National institution for isiXhosa-speakers and prohibited the enrolment of Black students at the Universities of Cape Town (UCT), the Witwatersrand (Wits) and Natal. Further, this study evaluates the success of NUSAS, a leading opponent of university apartheid and proscribed at the new Black university colleges, in securing the affiliation of the Turfloop student body. It is contended that engagement with students at Turfloop and other Black universities was one of the factors leading to the radicalisation of NUSAS in the early to mid-1960s. In addition, it is argued that Turfloop students of the early 1960s had many of the same reservations about NUSAS as the founders of SASO later that decade.

The archival sources for this study are drawn from the papers of the National Union of South African Students housed in the Leo Marquard NUSAS Archive (BC586) in the Special Collections of the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town.¹² The file relating to the UCON (M2) offers a glimpse into the world of Black students attending an apartheid university during the 1960s. Though much of the material is authored by Turfloop students themselves and is thus the authentic voice of members of the student body, several reports comprise observations made by NUSAS officers regarding campus affairs. This has the effect of white student leaders interpreting the

12 University of Cape Town (UCT), Jagger Library, Special Collections, Leo Marquard NUSAS Archive (LMNA), BC586. Hereafter, "UCT, LMNA, BC586".

world of Black students and conveying their views, a practice unequivocally condemned by SASO. Moreover, the UCON file is framed by NUSAS's commitment to academic freedom and student rights, rights and freedoms not necessarily of paramount importance, or relevance, to UCON students during the 1960s. A further limitation of the primary sources is the inevitable self-censorship of correspondence necessitated by the oppressive security climate of the 1960s and the surveillance to which both UCON students and the NUSAS leadership were subjected.¹³

2. UNIVERSITY APARTHEID AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UCON

Flowing from their commitment to academic freedom, UCT and Wits (the "open" universities) admitted all academically eligible students, resulting in a small but growing Black student enrolment at both institutions.¹⁴ Black students at the open universities were subject to an unevenly applied social colour bar, meaning that student accommodation, sports facilities and dances were segregated or barred to Black students.¹⁵ The University College of Fort Hare was southern Africa's premier Black higher education institution and though largely an African university, was a "microcosm" of a non-racial society according to students there during the late 1950s.¹⁶ It was this, and the nascent racial integration at the open universities,¹⁷ so at odds with,

13 By 1963, NUSAS's telephone was tapped, its office bugged and its mail opened. During the early 1960s, correspondence relating to Fort Hare was conducted in code. During the late 1960s, information was conveyed through hand-delivered messages and was often not recorded. Several letters written by Turfloop students and NUSAS officers state that certain issues should only be discussed in person. See, C Driver, "NUSAS Presidency, 1963-4" (unpublished memoir), p. 12; Interview: Author with H Kleinschmidt, telephonically, 7 October 2014. RE: NUSAS; UCT, LMNA, BC586, M1: file relating to Fort Hare; M2: Max - Alan, 13 April 1964 (letter).

14 In 1959, approximately 12 per cent of UCT's student body was black (633/5104) and at Wits, less than 5 per cent (307/5120). M Horrell, *A survey of race relations 1961* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1961).

15 B Murray, *Wits the "open" years: A history of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 1939-1959* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1997), p. 129; H Phillips, *UCT under apartheid: Part 1 – Onset to sit-in! 1948-1968* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2019), pp. 271-272.

16 Beard, "Student activities at Fort Hare", p. 156; M Moerane, "Forward". In: D Massey, *Under Protest: The rise of student resistance at the University of Fort Hare* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2010), p. xxi.

17 A UCT SRC-appointed commission of inquiry found that by 1960 campus social activities and even sports clubs were integrated to a surprising degree. This report was never made public because of its explosive findings. UCT, LMNA, BC586, O5.1: UCT SRC, Monica Wilson - "Mr Melmed", 22 May 1962 (letter).

and a threat to the National Party's (NP) apartheid policy, that precipitated government intervention in the admission policies of these universities.

Nonetheless, the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Acts of 1959 were ideologically conflicted. They were founded on competing interpretations of apartheid. During their ten-year evolution, they were shaped by the shifting and often contradictory efforts of the NP government to assert its control over the state and society in the face of obstacles and opposition.¹⁸ On the one hand, these statutes were simply racist segregatory measures aimed at removing Black students from the "open" universities, though sometimes premised on discredited Social Darwinist notions of racial hierarchy and hygiene.¹⁹ On the other, this virulent racism was coated with a thin veneer of idealism by casting university apartheid in a developmental, albeit ethnic, mould. Thus, the new and expropriated African universities were intended to train the functionaries required for the Bantustans of the future,²⁰ hazily envisioned in the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act of 1959, the home-grown apartheid response of Verwoerd and the ideologues in the Native Affairs Department to both continued domestic Black resistance and the rapid decolonisation of the rest of the African continent.²¹ Drawing on the recently concluded All-African Peoples' Conference in Accra in December 1958, where those present committed themselves inter alia to ridding the continent of colonialism, the creation of an "African personality"²² and the development of African culture and history untrammelled by western imperialism,²³ the apartheid ideologues opportunistically argued that these too were the aims of government higher education policy.²⁴ The "jingoist" open universities and Fort Hare, the ideologues including Verwoerd alleged, produced anti-Afrikaans "Black Englishmen" [sic]²⁵ imbued with an "alien and contemptuous attitude towards their own culture"²⁶ who were not prepared to

18 M Beale, *Apartheid and university education, 1948-1970* (PhD, University of the Witwatersrand, 1998), pp. 9, 30-31, 107-108, 151, 170, 216-217, 459-460.

19 Union of South Africa, House of Assembly Debates, *Hansard*, 9 April 1959, columns 3302, 3303, 3306; House of Assembly Debates, *Hansard*, 22 April 1959, columns 4494-4495.

20 Union of South Africa (UG 32), *Report of the Commission on the Separate University Education Bill* (Parow: Cape Times Printer, 1958), pp. 4-5.

21 D Welsh, *The rise and fall of apartheid* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2009), pp. 68-69.

22 V Thompson, *Africa and unity: The evolution of Pan-Africanism* (London: Longman, 1977), pp. 133-134.

23 House of Assembly Debates, *Hansard*, 10/11 April 1959, column 3676.

24 House of Assembly Debates, *Hansard*, 10/11 April 1959, columns 3676-3678.

25 *Cape Argus*, 18 March 1957; UCT, LMNA, BC586, O5.1: "University of Cape Town Students' Representative Council: Extracts of 40-page transcript of verbal evidence placed before Separate Universities Commission by Messrs T Coombe (NUSAS), D Clain (UCT-SRC), N Bromberger (UCT-SRC)", s.a., c. 1958, pp. 7-8.

26 UG 32, *Commission on Separate University Education Bill*, p. 4.

serve their communities,²⁷ and, as dangerously, espoused liberal values and notions of political and social equality.

Stamping out aspirations of equality, implicitly promoted to various degrees by Christian missionaries in their schools, was one of the important aims of government education policy for Africans.²⁸ The Bantu Education Act of 1953 wrested control of African education from the churches, enabling the Native Affairs Department to impose social and political control over urban African youth and channel it through an education system designed to prepare its products for their lowly position in the economy.²⁹ The Extension of University Education Act of 1959 was an extension of Bantu Education into tertiary education and likewise shared the same goals.

There was considerable opposition to Bantu Education during the 1950s, particularly on the Witwatersrand, the provenance of many future UCON students.³⁰ Moreover, large parts of the northern, eastern and western Transvaal, feeder areas to the UCON, were hotbeds of resistance to Betterment and Bantu Authorities and frequently to Bantu Education too.³¹ To ensure that the government retained ideological and political control over the new ethnic colleges, a draconian code of conduct was incorporated into the Extension of University Education Act.³² Moreover, the new African university colleges were situated, like reform schools, in remote, isolated rural African reserves requiring permits for entry.³³ This enabled even tighter control over students as well as the eventual absorption of the colleges into rural ethnic governance structures and ultimately the Bantustans. Academic and

27 UG 32, *Commission on Separate University Education Bill*, p. 5.

28 B Hirson, *Year of fire, year of ash: The Soweto Revolt: Roots of a revolution?* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2016), p. 41.

29 J Hyslop, "A destruction coming in', Bantu education as a response to social crisis". In: P Bonner *et al.* (eds.), *Apartheid's genesis: 1935-1962* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), pp. 400-401; C Glaser, "When Are They Going to Fight? Tsotsis, youth politics and the PAC". In: P Bonner *et al.*, (eds.), *Apartheid's genesis: 1935-1962* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), p. 308.

30 Hirson, *Year of fire, year of ash*, pp. 47-56; T Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1985), pp. 114-134.

31 P Delius, *A lion amongst the cattle: Reconstruction and resistance in the Northern Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1996), pp. 109-128; S Zondi, "Peasant struggles in the 1950s: ga Matlala and Zeerust". In: South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), pp. 147-175.

32 House of Assembly Debates, *Hansard*, 8 April 1959, column 3174; House of Assembly Debates, *Hansard*, 22 April 1959, column 4477; UG 32, *Commission on the Separate University Education Bill*, p. 20.

33 UCT, LMNA, BC586, A2.1: John Shingler - Laurie Geffen, 15 March 1960 (letter). The University College of Durban-Westville for Indians was situated in abandoned military barracks on Salisbury Island in Durban Bay and received the colloquial name, "The Island" or "Alcatraz". UCT, LMNA, BC586, A2.1: Adrian Leftwich - Hugh Lewin, 25 May 1961 (letter); Desai, "Theatre of struggle: Black Consciousness on Salisbury Island".

administrative staff, overwhelmingly white - ironically considering that these were supposedly decolonised black institutions - were sourced internally from the Department of Bantu Education or were recruited from the Afrikaans-medium universities,³⁴ making the new universities an extension of these NP-orientated institutions.³⁵ Governance of the new university colleges was vested in white councils and senates. "Black advisory councils", composed largely of compliant traditional leaders and apartheid collaborators,³⁶ fulfilled an advisory apprenticeship function,³⁷ an uneasy synthesis of trusteeship, tribalism and developmentalism.

The UCON, intended for speakers of Sotho, Xitsonga and Tshivenda, located on the farm, "Turfloop", thirty kilometres from Pietersburg (now Polokwane), opened in January 1960. Its first 88 students, almost all male, enrolled for degrees and diplomas in the arts, sciences, education, trading and "native administration",³⁸ all appropriate learning areas for future homeland personnel. Financed by direct African taxation,³⁹ the new UCON was an impressive-looking structure,⁴⁰ though built and operating at a fraction of the cost of the new University of Ghana.⁴¹ UCON's architecture famously boasted a "pseudo-'Bantu' façade"⁴² and in the place of conventional student common rooms, traditional outdoor *lapas* with kraal manure floors.⁴³ In keeping with the developmental ethos, vegetables and meat were purchased from African farmers in the local reserve and an African butcher in Pietersburg, respectively.⁴⁴

The government was anxious to showcase its commitment to what could be termed its home-grown decolonised ethnic education. An ideal opportunity presented itself in January 1960, when the British prime-minister, Harold Macmillan, paid a visit to the UCON. Shortly before his famous "wind of change" speech in the South African parliament, where he voiced Britain's

34 Beale, *Apartheid and university education*, pp. 242-243; RH du Pre, "Historical positioning". In: CC Thomas, *Wakker wakker en aan die brand: Waarneminge van 'n studente-activis, UWK, 1976* (Bellville: Mayibuye, University of the Western Cape, 1997), p. 12; White, *Despair to hope*, p. 78.

35 Gwala, "State control, student politics and Black universities", p. 170.

36 *New Age*, 21 January 1960; M Horrell, South African Institute of Race Relations, "Report by Research Officer on a visit to the University College of the North, 4 April 1960" (R.R. 74/60, 7.4.60. Spe., p. 2.

37 House of Assembly Debates, *Hansard*, 10/11 April 1959, column 3662; UG 32, *Commission on the Separate University Education Bill*, pp. 11-18.

38 Horrell, *Survey of race relations 1959-1960*, pp. 229, 237.

39 House of Assembly Debates, *Hansard*, 10/11 April 1959, columns 3624, 3628-3629.

40 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Clive Rosendorff, "Turfloop Report", 2 June 1961, p. 4.

41 Beale, *Apartheid and university education*, p. 342.

42 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Clive Rosendorff, "Turfloop report", 2 June 1961, p. 2.

43 White, *Despair to hope*, pp. 76, 86.

44 Horrell, "Report on a visit to the University College of the North", p. 2.

endorsement of African nationalism and decolonisation, an “uncomfortable looking Macmillan” was invested with the authority of an African traditional leader, a leopard skin kaross pinned to his suit. Present at this ceremony was the alleged Sekhukhune paramount himself. In the words of Saul Dubow, “the discordant artificiality of this staged exercise in Verwoerdian tribalism was heightened by a performance of Purcell’s ‘Nymphs and shepherds’ put on by a Sotho girl choir”.⁴⁵

Therefore, it was not surprising that the UCON Staff Association expressed its concern at the possible decline and westernisation of “Bantu” culture. It was thus anxious to construct and nurture the development of a new, modern “Bantu” culture on the campus, a prelude to the forging of an apartheid-inclined “Bantu” from the supposedly “mental[ly] different” student body.⁴⁶ By 1962, a pottery and art studio was in existence⁴⁷, but an apartheid-inclined “Bantu” proved elusive. The first rector of the UCON, Professor Ernest F Potgieter, stated in 1960 that the university’s task was “to build a university of our own and function as one organism”. Twenty-eight years later, he claimed that he and his staff had aimed at the gradual creation of “First World individuals” “freed from traditional emotionalism”.⁴⁸ This was presumably a reference to the commonly held racist view that Africans were naturally emotional, lacked initiative, had low levels of aspiration and displayed a tendency to be late and talk around the point.⁴⁹ By contrast, Potgieter alleged, Verwoerd envisaged “guiding” Africans to the “Third World”.⁵⁰

3. TURFLOOP STUDENT POLITICS: 1960-1961

Certainly, many of the UCON’s first students would have fundamentally opposed Verwoerd’s vision of their Third World future. Many resentfully and reluctantly enrolled at the new university, believing it to be an inferior apartheid structure, the doors to their preferred institutions barred by the Extension of University Education Act.⁵¹ According to contemporary observers, most of Turfloop’s first students were politicised and radical, particularly those from the Witwatersrand. However, some from the rural

45 S Dubow, “Macmillan, Verwoerd and the 1960 ‘Wind of Change Speech’”, *The Historical Journal* 54 (4) 2011, pp. 1093-1094.

46 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Anon. (allegedly authored by the head of the History Department), “A few notes on the role which a University College of the North Staff Association should be able to fill”, s.a., c. 1960.

47 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, “A few notes on two visits to Turfloop” s.a., c. 1962, p. 1.

48 White, *Despair to hope*, pp. 85-86.

49 Manganyi, *Being-black-in-the-world*, p. 11.

50 White, *Despair to hope*, pp. 85-86.

51 White, *Despair to hope*, p. 99.

areas and the central and northern Transvaal were believed to be ignorant of the nature of other universities and were willing to make the new institution work.⁵² There were exceptions to this rural-urban divide: Chabani Manganyi, a member of Turfloop's first SRC, was dragged into dissident politics at the end of his school career following the implementation of Bantu Education at his missionary school outside Louis Trichardt (Makhado) in the northern Transvaal.⁵³ Despite a core of politicised students, the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960 and the subsequent imposition of a state of emergency and the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-African Congress (PAC) provoked no "overt" campus response.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, during 1960-1961, students were not the docile and obedient subjects desired by the state and university authorities. Students flouted the order to build the college playing fields,⁵⁵ embarked on a three-day boycott of the refectory because of their dislike of one of the wardens⁵⁶ and declined to be interviewed for a radio documentary commissioned by the state broadcaster, forcing the staff to impersonate students.⁵⁷ They also refused to elect *secundi*, junior to the rector-appointed paid residence prefects or *primarii*.⁵⁸ Because they were the eyes and ears of the rector, the *primarii* were regarded as untrustworthy and akin to informers.

In conformity with Bantu Education, both official languages, English and Afrikaans, were designated the media of instruction at UCON.⁵⁹ More often than not, however, lectures and university business were conducted in Afrikaans,⁶⁰ a practice perceived by many students as a conspiracy intended to enforce Afrikaans and side-line English.⁶¹ A decade and a half later, the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in African schools was the spark that ignited the Soweto Uprising. It could be inferred that some of this opposition to Afrikaans had its origin amongst students at the ethnic universities, who, following their graduation, entered the school system as teachers. At Turfloop,

52 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Clive Rosendorff, "Turfloop report", 2 June 1961, p. 3.

53 N Manganyi, *Apartheid and the making of a black psychologist: A memoir* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016), pp. 11-15.

54 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Horrell, "Report on a visit to the University College of the North", p. 4.

55 "Turfloop students afraid to think", *New Age*, 1 June 1961.

56 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B3: Executive Minutes, 1960, p. 9; M2: Bennet Marenga and Job Molepo, "Report on the activities at Turfloop", s.a., c. 1960, p. 6.

57 "Fort Hare and Turfloop students protest against intrusion: SABC man ordered out", *Varsity*, 8 September 1960.

58 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B3: Executive Minutes, 1960, p. 9.

59 Horrell, *Survey of race relations 1959-1960*, p. 237.

60 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B3: Executive Minutes, 1960, p. 9.

61 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Marenga and Molepo, "Report on the activities at Turfloop", pp. 9-10.

then in the early 1960s, resistance to the delivery of lectures and inaugural lectures in Afrikaans, as well as racially segregated seating at university functions, occurred regularly.⁶² On the occasion of a student boycott of an inaugural lecture, armed police guarded the function venue.⁶³ At the beginning of 1961, two students were refused readmission to the university without any reasons being proffered. Neither student was particularly visible as an activist or leader, though both had participated in the dining room boycott and significantly, had corresponded with NUSAS.⁶⁴ These effective expulsions were viewed as pure intimidation⁶⁵ and instilled an almost paralysing fear in the student body.⁶⁶

This affected the fate of the newly constituted SRC. Negotiations for the establishment of an SRC deadlocked over the degree of control that each party would have over the structure. Students drafted a constitution for a purely elected body that deprived the *primarii* and *secundi* of any representation, a measure which the rector would not initially sanction.⁶⁷ The SRC was finally constituted in early 1961, but within a few months, students were arguing for its disbandment as the whole structure was being rendered impotent by the rector, who exploited in divide and rule fashion, the ideological and tactical differences of its members.⁶⁸ By June 1961, several students had resigned from the SRC after being reprimanded for visiting Wits without permission and speaking to the press after a negative report on the UCON appeared in the *Sunday Times*.⁶⁹

In addition, the SRC was accused of working towards a “crisis”,⁷⁰ presumably connected to the inauguration of the republic on 31 May 1961. Many Turfloop students responded sympathetically to the call of Nelson Mandela of the All-In Conference for a national stay-at-home in protest against the inauguration of the republic and the failure of the government to convene a national convention to draw up a new constitution for South

62 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Marenga and Molepo, “Report on the activities at Turfloop”, pp. 9-10; UCT, LMNA, BC586, B3: Executive Minutes, 1960, p. 9; “Turfloop students resist ‘Afrikanerisation’”, *New Age*, 28 September 1961.

63 “Turfloop students afraid to think”, *New Age*, 1 June 1961.

64 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: “Report on the refusal of re-admittance of two students to the University College of the North”, s.a., c. 1961.

65 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Wits SRC, “Report to NUSAS Assembly, July 1961”, p. 5; M2: M Bobrow - Minister of Bantu Education, 25 April 1961 (letter).

66 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Clive Rosendorff, “Turfloop report”, 2 June 1961.

67 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B3: Executive Minutes, 1960, p. 9.

68 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B4.1: Adrian Leftwich - Executive, 24 April 1961 (letter); M2: Anon., “Copy”, s.a., c. 1961.

69 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Wits SRC, “Report to NUSAS Assembly, July 1961”, pp. 5-6; M2: “Vice-President” - Adrian Leftwich, 25 February 1961 (letter).

70 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Anon., “Copy”, s.a., c. 1961.

Africa,⁷¹ and likewise called for a boycott of classes. However, this was vetoed by “southerners” on the SRC who refused to be used as a “political platform” in an action they suspected would be “deplor[ed]” by the rector.⁷² There were possibly other factors that led to this decision. The “southerners” could quite justifiably have feared the consequences of the state’s massive show of force in the run-up to the inauguration and/or were simply following the lead of the PAC, which did not endorse the stay-at-home and actively opposed it in some parts of the Witwatersrand.⁷³

4. AFFILIATION TO NUSAS?

Taking no stand on the republic but endorsing the call for a national convention and certainly liable to be “deplored” by the rector was NUSAS. NUSAS was an affiliation of the SRCs representing the student bodies of most of the English-medium, predominantly white institutions of higher learning in South Africa, as well as Fort Hare. In 1957, NUSAS adopted the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the foundation of its policy,⁷⁴ thereby implicitly endorsing a universal franchise and the dismantling of South Africa’s racial order. To avoid unduly alienating its conservative white membership, NUSAS downplayed the more controversial aspects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and confined its opposition to apartheid, as far as possible, to the educational sphere.

NUSAS actively opposed university apartheid. By 1959 it had brought together a broad array of educational, civil society organisations and political parties, both domestically and abroad, which were loosely united under the banner of defending university autonomy and academic freedom against government encroachments on the universities.⁷⁵ NUSAS not only opposed proposed university apartheid legislation but, after its enactment, sought to bypass or thwart it. Using funds procured overseas, the national union attempted to facilitate the enrolment of as many Black students as possible at the “open” universities before they were racially closed.⁷⁶ Moreover, it launched the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED), a distance education institution through which Black students could read for

71 Lodge, *Black politics*, pp. 231-232; N Mandela, *Long walk to freedom: The autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Randburg: Macdonald Purnell, 1995), pp. 245-246.

72 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Anon., “Copy”, s.a., c. 1961.

73 T Lodge, *Sharpeville: An apartheid massacre and its consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 197.

74 Legassick, *The National Union of South African Students: Ethnic cleavage and ethnic integration*, p. 30.

75 See, McKay, *History of NUSAS*, pp. 98-123; 188-191; 201-211.

76 Interview: Author with N Rubin, Cape Town, 4 April 1997. RE: NUSAS.

degrees through the University of London. Thabo Mbeki (the second president of post-apartheid South Africa) was one of SACHED's first and most famous recruits.⁷⁷ NUSAS also took every opportunity to expose the inadequacies and authoritarian nature of the new Black universities through its newsletters, press releases and the national and international student press. More controversially, during 1961-1962, NUSAS secretly sought to render the ethnic universities unworkable by identifying potential student "crises" and exploiting them.⁷⁸ The anti-republican "crisis" at Turfloop discussed earlier was possibly connected to this unworkability policy in the same way as a similar "crisis" playing out simultaneously at Fort Hare was.⁷⁹ Given the foregoing, it was not surprising that the state would not permit NUSAS to operate at its new Black universities. Nonetheless, the national union was determined to retain its presence at Fort Hare and establish itself elsewhere too.

The Turfloop rector, Professor EF Potgieter, made it abundantly clear that NUSAS was not welcome at the UCON. He warned the NUSAS president in 1960 that as the national union was one of the most outspoken critics of the new universities, it could not expect, in his patronising words, to "organise our students for us". Moreover, he explained that only the churches would be welcome on the campus until a student "esprit de corps" had taken root.⁸⁰ In 1962, NUSAS's first official visit to Turfloop was inexplicably cancelled by the university authorities, perhaps because of the inclusion in the delegation of NUSAS's Black vice-president, Thami Mhlambiso,⁸¹ an ANC activist expelled from Fort Hare for his opposition to the new apartheid college authorities.⁸² It was possible too that Mhlambiso had paid a clandestine visit to the UCON shortly before the abortive anti-republican protest.⁸³

Finally, on 30 April 1962, an entirely white NUSAS executive delegation, composed of Adrian Leftwich and Denis Hunt, arrived at Turfloop. To the visitors' surprise, they were cordially received by Potgieter and the college staff.⁸⁴ However, all was not as it seemed.⁸⁵ On their return journey to

77 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Presidential Report, 1960, pp. 43-44; M Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: The dream deferred* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2007), pp. 129, 132.

78 McKay, *History of NUSAS*, pp. 270-274.

79 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Anon., "Copy", s.a., c. 1961.

80 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: E Potgieter - "President", 7 March 1960 (letter); B1: Presidential Report, 1960, p. 28.

81 UCT, LMNA, BC586, A2.2: Adrian Leftwich - Thami Mhlambiso, 19 March 1962 (letter); M2: "Galloway"- Adrian Leftwich, 16 March 1962; Adrian Leftwich - "Galloway", 19 March 1962 (letters); Adrian Leftwich - E. Potgieter, 18 April 1962 (letter); "NUSAS president banned from tribal college", *Witwatersrand Student*, 30 March 1962.

82 *New Age*, 2 March 1961.

83 McKay, *History of NUSAS*, p. 300.

84 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" s.a., c. 1962.

85 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B4.1: Adrian Leftwich – Executive (letter), 11 May 1962.

Pietersburg, white Afrikaans-speaking youth tricked Leftwich and Hunt into stopping their car, vandalised it and shaved their heads with sheep shears.⁸⁶ Many Turfloop students were outraged and embarrassed by the incident and suspected that the university authorities had played a hand in it but were too afraid to point fingers.⁸⁷

Leftwich and Hunt received a warm welcome from the Turfloop SRC and the student body. Nonetheless, they were subjected to an uncompromising interrogation of NUSAS's policies and what the organisation had to offer African students. They also faced criticism and outright rejection.⁸⁸ This experience, along with a follow-up visit by the entire Wits SRC, had a profound effect on NUSAS, which was in the throes of much soul-searching regarding its policy and future direction in a fundamentally changed university and South African environment.

This changed environment was firstly a consequence of the failure of the campaign against university apartheid and, secondly, the events at Sharpeville and the subsequent construction of a police state. Thirdly, NUSAS had acquired a far larger number of Black members, some of whom believed that NUSAS could partially fill the vacuum left by the banning of the liberation movements and provide a cover for their other more important underground political activities.⁸⁹ Fourthly, and contradictorily considering the foregoing, NUSAS was threatened with the loss of its Black membership following the establishment of two new specifically African student organisations in 1961. These were the ANC-aligned ASA and the PAC-aligned ASUSA.⁹⁰ In addition, the radical Non-European Unity Movement-aligned Progressive Students National Organisation (PSNO) had a presence at Fort Hare and was challenging the student body's affiliation to NUSAS.⁹¹ Thus the NUSAS leadership was beginning to conclude that the national union would have to become more radical, militant and activist. Moreover, within the context of the African independence movement and the quest for Pan-African student co-operation, vexing questions were being asked about whether whites could

86 "The inside story - Hunt hairless: Full details of strange night attack", *Witwatersrand Student*, 11 May 1962.

87 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Gessler Nkondo - Adrian Leftwich, 4 May 1962 (letter); D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" s.a., c. 1962, pp. 8, 10.

88 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B4.1: Adrian Leftwich - Executive, 11 May 1962, p. 9 (letter); Gessler Nkondo - Adrian Leftwich, 4 May 1962; Adrian Leftwich - Gessler Nkondo, 16 June 1962 (letters); JTC Sono - M Stewart, 14 May 1962 (letter); D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" s.a., c. 1962, pp. 8, 10.

89 W Nagan, "Truth, reconciliation, and the fragility of heroic activism", *Global Jurist Advances* 5 (1) 2005, p. 9.

90 Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki*, pp. 142-146.

91 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B3: Executive Minutes, 1961, "Annexure", p. 7; B4.1: Adrian Leftwich - Executive, 13 September 1961; 4 October 1961, p. 4 (letters).

be classified as Africans and whether the predominantly white, though non-racial NUSAS could continue legitimately to claim to be the representative organisation of all South African students, or whether this status would be revoked and conferred on ASA, ASUSA and PSNO.

From the outset, NUSAS had a cordial and cooperative relationship with ASA.⁹² However, no formal ties between the two organisations were established because of ASA's fears that this would jeopardise its efforts to effect a rapprochement with the Africanist and anti-NUSAS ASUSA.⁹³ ASA failed to define what it meant by "African", its prerequisite for membership. Some members felt that limiting ASA to Black Africans only was racist⁹⁴ and that students of other races and colours might also merit the classification of African. But this was rejected by those who asserted that they could not accept domination by other races.⁹⁵

Turfloop students did not hold this latter view. They also attempted to establish a branch of ASA on the campus but this was vetoed by the UCON authorities because of the organisation's closeness to the ANC.⁹⁶ During its executive visit to Turfloop, NUSAS discovered that the student body accepted that whites were Africans too - and that "white Africans" had a political role to play⁹⁷ - but that nonetheless, its interpretation of "African" was primarily in the more conventional colour sense of "Black African". Students expressed their concern that the African voice within NUSAS was muted because of limited African membership. To mitigate this problem, they proposed that an "upper house" composed of representatives of all the universities be created.⁹⁸ In 1964 NUSAS deliberated opening its membership to senior African secondary school pupils to increase its African representation but eventually abandoned the idea.⁹⁹

92 UCT, LMNA, BC586, S24: Thabo Mbeki - Adrian Leftwich, 4 December 1961 (letter); B4.1: Adrian Leftwich - Executive, 8 November 1961 (letter).

93 UCT, LMNA, BC586, S24: Adrian Leftwich - Mike Ngubeni, 14 November 1961 (letter); Thabo Mbeki - Adrian Leftwich, 4 December 1961; Thabo Mbeki - NUSAS President, 30 December 1961 (letters).

94 UCT, LMNA, BC586, S24: Thabo Mbeki, "Secretarial report of the Organising Secretary of the African Students Association", p. 2; "Minutes of the inaugural national conference of the African Students' Association held in Durban on the 16th and 17th December 1961", p. 3.

95 UCT, LMNA, BC586, S24: Thami Mhlambiso, "Report on the African Students' Association conference held in Durban, 16th-17th December, 1961", p. 4.

96 S Vuma, *The role played by University of the North activism in the struggle against apartheid from 1968-1994* (MA, University of Limpopo, 2018), p. 38.

97 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" s.a., c. 1962, pp. 4-5.

98 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" s.a., c. 1962, pp. 4, 5, 6.

99 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Congress Minutes, 1964, p. 40.

White Afrikaans-speaking students were also a tiny minority within NUSAS, the Afrikaans-medium universities having disaffiliated from NUSAS in the 1930s for racist and Afrikaner nationalist reasons.¹⁰⁰ From 1948, they were organised into the Afrikaanse Studentebond (ASB), a Christian-National, apartheid-supporting student union that was actively hostile towards NUSAS.¹⁰¹ Thus Turfloop students questioned how NUSAS hoped to incorporate Black students into the organisation when it failed to effect even white student unity. Some Turfloop students recommended then that the national union focus its attention on converting students at the Afrikaans-medium universities away from apartheid,¹⁰² a role similar to that assigned to NUSAS and other white liberal organisations by the future BCM.¹⁰³

To the NUSAS delegation's consternation, the Durban SRC's proposed Federal Secretariat (FEDSEC), based on ethnic representation¹⁰⁴ similar to that of the ASB's newly-created apartheid confederation of students,¹⁰⁵ was favourably viewed by many Turfloop students. FEDSEC was touted as a pragmatic solution to the problem of national student unity in the face of NUSAS's proscription at the new Black ethnic universities¹⁰⁶ and, presumably too, the proscription of ASA on the Turfloop campus. But what was probably reassuring for NUSAS in the context of the establishment of ASA and ASUSA was that some Turfloop students accepted the primacy of NUSAS in South African student affairs and suggested, controversially, that ASA become a NUSAS sub-committee.¹⁰⁷

NUSAS was subjected to a fair amount of criticism from the student body. Perhaps pointing to the influence of the Afrikaner Nationalist history taught at the university or to a radical and/or Africanist critique of missionaries and cultural imperialism,¹⁰⁸ one student alleged that since "the time of Dr Philip, the English have been hypocrites". An example of this hypocrisy was that despite their opposition to university apartheid legislation, the "open"

100 N Rubin, *History of the relations between NUSAS, the Afrikaanse Studentebond and the Afrikaans university centres* (Cape Town: NUSAS, 1960), pp. 4-8.

101 J Fick, "Afrikaner student politics – past and present". In: H van der Merwe and D Welsh (eds.), *Student perspectives on South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1972), pp. 70, 82.

102 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" s.a., c. 1962, p. 5.

103 S Biko, *I write what I like* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2013), p. 27.

104 "No to FEDSEC: UCT, Wits, Bellville reject Durban proposals", *Varsity*, 28 June 1961.

105 "Konfederasie die enigste basis van samewerking – ASB president", *Die Wapad*, 18 October 1960.

106 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" s.a., c. 1962, pp. 4, 5, 6.

107 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" s.a., c. 1962, pp. 4, 6.

108 T Keegan, *Dr Phillip's empire: One man's struggle for justice in nineteenth-century South Africa* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2016), pp. 2-3, 333.

universities still operated a social colour bar.¹⁰⁹ Campus social segregation, enforced by the authorities of the universities hosting NUSAS's annual congresses, would be the catalyst for the creation of SASO in 1968.¹¹⁰

NUSAS was informed that its ineffectual opposition to government measures meant that it had nothing to offer Turfloop students. Others felt it was unfair to hold NUSAS responsible for apartheid and argued that Africans had done very little themselves to oppose the racial order. They asserted that apartheid applied to Africans and as such, Africans should stand up and fight racial domination themselves using a philosophy devised by Africans.¹¹¹ This was a distinctly PAC-derived argument, which with the substitution of "African" for the broader and more inclusive "Black", would form the basis of Black Consciousness ideology of the future.

The anti-apartheid struggle was again the subject of discussion a few weeks later during the joint Wits-Turfloop symposium on "the role of university students in a changing society".¹¹² This symposium provided a useful sounding board for African views in the run-up to NUSAS's critical 1962 annual congress. Members of the Turfloop student body argued that as an intellectual elite, students should either lead or play an active role in the struggle for liberation, which in some cases might take the form of a violent revolution.¹¹³ The leading role of students in the liberation movement was entirely consistent with the thinking of national liberation movements on the rest of the African continent and in keeping with emerging New Left thought, which cast students as one of society's new revolutionary forces. SASO, a product of the New Left, would also endow a leading liberatory role to students, the Black elite.¹¹⁴ In the more immediate future, a controversial proposal that NUSAS transform itself into the student wing of the liberation movement was put forward and ultimately rejected at the national union's National Leadership Seminar in 1964.¹¹⁵

In weighing up the possibility of Turfloop joining NUSAS – and there was talk of establishing a branch based on individual membership¹¹⁶ – the NUSAS

109 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" *s.a.*, c. 1962, p. 5.

110 Biko, *I write what I like*, p. 12.

111 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" *s.a.*, c. 1962, p. 6.

112 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Neil Callie, "Report to the 38th NUSAS Assembly, July 1962", p. 4.

113 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" *s.a.*, c. 1962, p. 8.

114 C Halisi, "Black Consciousness philosophy: An interpretation". In: B Pityana *et al.* (eds.), *Bounds of possibility: The legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), pp. 107-109.

115 M Legassick, *Towards socialist democracy* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007), p. 3.

116 "Leftwich, Hunt visit: Turfloop SRC defers decision to join NUSAS", *Witwatersrand Student*, 4 May 1962; UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, "A few notes on two visits to Turfloop" *s.a.*, c. 1962, p. 9.

delegate made some general observations about campus political alignments. The student body, he sensed, and the “liberally-minded” SRC were, on the whole, sympathetic to NUSAS, but this was masked by an articulate Africanist lobby, looking without much success, he believed, for a following. However, he discerned a marked and perhaps growing racial separatism which boded ill for the fortunes of the non-racial and largely white NUSAS,¹¹⁷ and which, with the benefit of historical hindsight, pointed to the student body’s future association with ASA and ASUSA or an entirely new black structure like SASO. The NUSAS delegate perceived an element of pragmatism within the student body too. Although many students realised the serious deficiencies of the UCON, the college offered them a degree of shelter from the harshness of apartheid, adequate subsistence and the possibility of future social mobility. It was questionable then whether Turfloop students would risk everything they had to associate with a proscribed organisation, which some regarded as hypocritical, and which could offer them very little in return.¹¹⁸

While deliberating its affiliation to NUSAS, the Turfloop student body attempted to participate in NUSAS’s campaign against the enactment of the “Sabotage” or General Law Amendment Bill. This campus-wide campaign culminated in a torchlight procession to parliament in June 1962.¹¹⁹ A mass meeting at Turfloop voted to stage a protest march too. Soon, however, fear gripped a portion of the student body, and ultimately the march was called off. Moreover, Potgieter got wind that something was afoot when he discovered anti-Sabotage Bill graffiti on the campus and proceeded to worm the protest arrangements out of the SRC.¹²⁰

Four members of the Turfloop SRC attended NUSAS’s critical annual national policy-making congress in July 1962, as observers.¹²¹ Here NUSAS resolved to oppose apartheid in its totality and actively work towards a new democratic dispensation.¹²² This broad new activist policy was symbolised by the election to the NUSAS honorary presidency of Ex-Chief Albert Luthuli, the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize winner and banned president of the proscribed ANC. Within the context of the extension of white male military conscription, NUSAS called for the right to conscientious objection.¹²³ As controversially for NUSAS’s conservative white membership, a decision was taken to sever all ties with the apartheid-supporting ASB. The NUSAS assembly reasoned, inter

117 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, “A few notes on two visits to Turfloop” s.a., c. 1962, p. 9.

118 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, “A few notes on two visits to Turfloop” s.a., c. 1962, p. 9.

119 *Witwatersrand Student, Special Anti-Sabotage Bill Issue*, 24 May 1962; “Police stop legal torchlight protest, ten held at UCT”, *Witwatersrand Student*, 22 June 1962.

120 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: D Hunt, “A few notes on two visits to Turfloop” s.a., c. 1962, p. 3.

121 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Congress Minutes, 1962, p. 42.

122 *Contact*, 9 August 1962; *New Age*, 2 August 1962.

123 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Congress Minutes, 1962, pp. 54, 127.

alia, that an association with such an organisation for the sake of national student co-operation was insulting to its Black members.¹²⁴

The Turfloop observers, at least two of whom were Africanists, were on the whole impressed with NUSAS and were in agreement with most of its policy. However, they questioned NUSAS's sincerity, or "lack thereof".¹²⁵ The SRC did not unanimously welcome the ASB resolution. Some members felt that it did not go far enough as NUSAS-affiliated SRCs were still free to meet their ASB-affiliated counterparts. Moreover, the pragmatists feared that putting the resolution into effect at Turfloop might provoke retaliatory action by the university authorities and the prohibition of contact with, and campus visits by, other organisations.¹²⁶ Even so, the SRC turned down a request by the ASB to visit Turfloop in 1963, citing the Afrikaans organisation's support for university apartheid as one of the reasons for its decision.¹²⁷

5. JOINING ASUSA AND PROTO-BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

Nor would the SRC host NUSAS for the next year and a half as each date proposed by the national union clashed with one set aside for an ASUSA visit.¹²⁸ The issue of affiliation remained unresolved. The SRC assured NUSAS however, that it was committed to maintaining contact and friendly relations with all student organisations and that it was opposed to separatist student structures.¹²⁹ Despite these assurances, NUSAS was attacked by a member of the Turfloop SRC at ASA's annual conference in December 1962.¹³⁰ Finally, in late 1963, the UCON student body voted unanimously to affiliate to the Africanist ASUSA.¹³¹ Joint NUSAS-ASUSA affiliation was ruled out as ASUSA expressly forbade this and, moreover, threatened with expulsion any member of the "non-indigenous" NUSAS within ASUSA's

124 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: "38th NUSAS Congress: Press release no. 5", 1962; *New Age*, 2 August 1962.

125 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Gessler Nkondo - Adrian Leftwich, 23 October 1962 (letter); Derek Bostock - Jonty Driver, 25 June 1963, p. 5 (letter).

126 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Derek Bostock - Jonty Driver, 25 June 1963, p. 6 (letter).

127 "Turfloop refuses ASB request", *Witwatersrand Student*, 7 June 1963.

128 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Presidential Report, 1963, pp. 55-56; B4.1: Jonty Driver - Executive, 4 June 1963 (letter); M2: Gessler Nkondo - Adrian Leftwich, 23 October 1962; 2 April 1963 (letters).

129 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Gessler Nkondo - Adrian Leftwich, 23 October 1962; 7 November 1962 (letters).

130 UCT, LMNA, BC586, S24: ASA, "Minutes of the first annual conference of the African Students Association (ASA) held at Durban on the 15th to the 17th December, 1962".

131 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: ERW Makhene - Jonty Driver, 15 November 1963; Jonty Driver - ERW Makhene, 26 November 1963 (letters); Alan [Murray] - Jonty [Driver] and Senior Executive, 27 January 1964 (letter).

ranks.¹³² Ironically enough, the NUSAS congress had, shortly before this, professed its support for Pan-Africanism as defined by the PAC. In addition, Robert Sobukwe's definition of an "African" was also adopted, though NUSAS was careful to distance itself from the banned liberation movement as such.¹³³ This policy development, remarkable given the political complexion of most of the national union's membership, was a consequence of a complex array of factors, briefly alluded to earlier, but undoubtedly also, NUSAS's experience at the Black universities, including Turfloop.

Employing the term "Black" as Anton Lembede had twenty years before and SASO would more inclusively, more than half a decade later, Max Tlakula, a member of ASUSA and the Turfloop SRC provided what he believed was the rationale for the formation of ASUSA. ASUSA was established, he explained, following "the realisation that the black student in the country ha[d] no organ to express his aspirations and work for their realisation".¹³⁴ In terms resonating with Manganyi's assertion that "mutual knowledge which is black consciousness and solidarity, is not by design racialism, it is a way of relating, of being-black-in-the-world in its temporality of past, present and future",¹³⁵ Tlakula elaborated,

To us African students, unity is a basic article of faith. We, as African students have to unite in order to work out our survival in a S.A. context. The colour accident...relates us African students to a common history which knits us [together] in common politics. In S.A. it is the colour fact which informs the politics on all levels of human relations. [...] The recognition of common facts is a unifying factor in our ranks. The spirit is not "racialism" [...] rather a consciousness of being which should enable us to adopt our rightful place in the community of nations. What are we? is the fundamental and determining question.¹³⁶

Moreover, he explained – as proponents of SASO would do too – that Africans as students had problems peculiarly their own and for this reason, NUSAS was incapable of fulfilling their aspirations.¹³⁷ Nonetheless, Tlakula believed that NUSAS's principles were "admirable" and aside from its reactionary membership, was a worthy organisation. Were the "socio-politico and economic" reality of South Africa different, and were African students

132 UCT, LMNA, BC586, S19: "Inaugural conference of the African Students' Union of South Africa held on the 16th and 17th December 1961 at the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Johannesburg".

133 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Congress Minutes, 1963, p. 132; B Pogrand, *How can a man die better? Sobukwe and apartheid* (London: Peter Halban, 1990), pp. 93, 95, 105.

134 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Max [Tlakula] - Alan [Murray], 13 April 1964, p. 4 (letter).

135 Manganyi, *Being-black-in-the-world*, p. 24.

136 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Max - Alan, 13 April 1964, p. 4 (letter).

137 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Max - Alan, 13 April 1964, pp. 2, 6.

prepared to remain an “amorphous mass”, NUSAS, with the value it placed on “individual worth” would, he believed, have won African approval.¹³⁸ ASUSA’s rejection of any association with NUSAS was apparently based on fears that its principles would be diluted in so doing. Tlakula, however, believed that African students lacked an African political consciousness and that engagement with NUSAS and its SRCs could stimulate the development of such.¹³⁹

Tlakula was not the only Turfloop ASUSA member grappling with the problems faced by Black students and elaborating a proto-Black Consciousness ideology. In 1964, Africanists at Turfloop, probably associated with ASUSA, explained many of the later concerns of the BCM to David Hirschmann,¹⁴⁰ the 1965/6 Wits SRC president.

Contact and correspondence between members of the Wits SRC and their Turfloop counterparts continued, resulting in occasional campus visits.¹⁴¹ However, NUSAS’s relationship with Turfloop weakened substantially over the next few years,¹⁴² as did any hope (largely abandoned as futile in 1961) on NUSAS’s part of making the campus unworkable.¹⁴³ Representatives of the SRC did attend NUSAS’s annual congress and “Day of Affirmation” in 1965,¹⁴⁴ while individual Turfloop students participated in the national union’s “Leadership Training Seminars”.¹⁴⁵

For the Turfloop student body, its attempted association with ASUSA also ran aground. The university authorities refused to sanction the affiliation even though the ASUSA constitution presented to it was innocuous. Indeed, the organisation’s aims of promoting African educational and cultural advancement¹⁴⁶ were likely to appeal to apartheid ideologues. Moreover, by 1964, both ASUSA and ASA were effectively moribund, neither having

138 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Max - Alan, 13 April 1964, p. 5.

139 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Max - Alan, 13 April 1964, p. 3.

140 D Hirschmann, “The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa”, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 28 (1), 1990, p. 3.

141 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Max - Alan, 26 March 1963 [sic 1964]; 13 April 1964; Alan - Max, 15 March 1964 (letters); Alan [Murray] - Jonty [Driver] and Senior Executive, 27 January 1964 (letter).

142 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Presidential Report, 1966, p. 62; M2: John Daniel - Eric Mafuna, 30 April 1968 (letter).

143 UCT, LMNA, BC586, A2.2: Anon., [Laurie Geffen - Adrian Leftwich], “Saturday” s.a., c. 1961 (letter).

144 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Robin Margo, Steve Clark and Juliet Coxon, “NUSAS: 41st annual congress, July 1965: Report of the Regional Secretaries for the Transvaal”, p. 3; M2: Maeder Osler - “Sir”, 18 August 1965 (letter); Peter Mansfield - “Mr Dauramanzi”, 12 October 1965 (letter).

145 UCT, LMNA, BC586 M2: Peter Mansfield - Sam Motshologane, 27 April 1965; Sam Motshologane - Peter Mansfield, 22 May 1965 (letters).

146 White, *Despair to hope*, p. 101.

entrenched themselves at the universities before falling victim to the national security crackdown of 1963-1964. Nonetheless, the Turfloop SRC remained committed to ASUSA and endeavoured to revive it,¹⁴⁷ but this was abandoned when only a handful of students arrived at a conference convened for this purpose in Johannesburg in 1965.¹⁴⁸ In 1968, the student body shelved its bid to secure official approval for its affiliation to ASUSA until more favourable circumstances prevailed.¹⁴⁹

Whether this was coincidental or not, the decision to affiliate to ASUSA in 1963 and the absence of any NUSAS campus visits that year, coincided with the belief of the university authorities that they were finally winning control over the student body.¹⁵⁰ That students appeared to be cowed and depoliticised seems to be borne out by the recollections of Mamphele Ramphela, a student at the UCON in 1967 and subsequently a leading member of SASO and the BCM. Ramphela did not attend any student body meeting while at the university and remembers the SRC as merely an efficient organiser of campus entertainment.¹⁵¹ This was certainly not the case the following year.

6. AFFILIATION TO NUSAS

1968 was the year of international student revolt. Employing the tactics of this student New Left, protesting students at UCT occupied the campus administration building in August 1968 and demanded the reversal of the university's decision to rescind its earlier offer of employment to a black anthropologist, Archie Mafeje.¹⁵² The installation of a new rector at Fort Hare and an even more authoritarian regime there was the catalyst for a sit-in and sustained protest by Fort Hare students over the abrogation of their rights. This resulted in the occupation of the campus by the police and mass student expulsions.¹⁵³ Turfloop students were drawn into these contemporaneous events, which NUSAS actively sought to link up. Shortly after being forbidden to hold a Fort Hare solidarity meeting in August 1968, the Turfloop student

147 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: SM Ramokgoba - "Sir" (SACHED, Cape Town), 5 August 1965 (letter).

148 UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Presidential Report, 1966, pp. 62, 81; *NUSAS Newsletter*, No. 3, 1965/6, 28 February 1966, p. 37.

149 White, *Despair to hope*, p. 102.

150 White, *Despair to hope*, p. 91.

151 M Ramphela, *Mamphele Ramphela: A life* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1996), p. 57.

152 M Plaut, "South African student protest, 1968: Remembering the Mafeje sit-in", *History Workshop Journal* 69, 2010, pp. 200-202.

153 Massey, *Under protest*, pp. 192-194.

body unanimously voted to seek affiliation to NUSAS.¹⁵⁴ In the opinion of Horst Kleinschmidt, NUSAS's Transvaal Regional Director, who played a significant role in securing this affiliation, this decision was motivated more by the student body's desire to break its isolation and seek contact with other students than any great attachment to NUSAS.¹⁵⁵

Kleinschmidt's reasons for this affiliation, as well as the student body's apparent rejection of NUSAS in 1963, are difficult to reconcile with the views of Themba Sono, a student at the UCON in the early 1960s and later a president of SASO. Sono argues that Turfloop students (and Black students in general) were wholly won over to NUSAS, and for most of the 1960s, were the national union's Black liberal champions of multi-racialism, integration and academic freedom.¹⁵⁶ For Turfloop students, no greater proof of NUSAS's integrity and commitment to racial integration and Black students' welfare could be found than in the selfless courage of Adrian Leftwich, who on visits to the Turfloop campus ate, slept and socialised with the student body and unequivocally and scornfully rejected all aspects of apartheid.¹⁵⁷

Perhaps this contradiction can be explained thus: precisely because Turfloop students were perceived to be liberal with little or no collective African nationalist consciousness and were unlikely to acquire such in a liberal individualist structure like NUSAS, Africanists, an articulate and active minority on the campus, ensured that the Turfloop student body would not be part of NUSAS, either officially or unofficially. Instead, they ensured that the student body would associate with an exclusively African organisation so as to develop a distinctive African nationalist consciousness.

Yet, running like a thread through the Turfloop student body's dealings with external student organisations is a distinctly discernible pragmatism. It was pragmatism that prompted the favourable consideration of the FEDSEC proposals in 1962 and, in part, pragmatism that drove the decision to reject membership of NUSAS and join ASUSA. With the goals of ASUSA superficially aligned to those of the university and the absence of white liberal "agitators" of NUSAS's ilk in the separatist Africanist ASUSA, it was hoped that the UCON authorities would sanction the affiliation. Abandoning its quest to affiliate to ASUSA and seeking NUSAS membership in 1968 were equally pragmatic decisions. ASUSA was virtually dead, and Black students at other Black higher educational institutions showed scant interest in reviving it. Student contact could be achieved within NUSAS, Black representation in NUSAS's policy-making student assembly having increased to nearly 50 per

154 UCT, LMNA, BC586, M2: Eric Mafuna - "Mr Innes", 20 August 1968 (letter).

155 Interview: Author with H Kleinschmidt, telephonically, 3 October 2014. RE: NUSAS.

156 Sono, *Reflections on the origins of Black Consciousness*, pp. 21-27.

157 Sono, *Reflections on the origins of Black Consciousness*, p. 22.

cent.¹⁵⁸ The changed demographic profile of NUSAS resolved the problem raised by the Turfloop student body in 1962 of the near absence of a Black African voice in the national union. And, for those who decided to affiliate to NUSAS in 1968, it opened up the possibility of Turfloop and Black students, in general, assuming a leadership and even transformative role in the national union.

Turfloop students had already influenced NUSAS's policy-making with regard to the adoption of a radical activist orientation in 1962. To gain credibility and recruit or retain Black membership, NUSAS placed a premium Black student participation in its Regional and National Leadership Seminars, instituted in 1963. As their name suggests, these were intended to identify and politically educate future NUSAS and campus leaders and, very importantly, were a forum for the discussion of future NUSAS policy. Thus students at the Black ethnic universities, including at the UCON, not officially part of NUSAS and identifying with the banned liberation movements and ASA and ASUSA,¹⁵⁹ came to determine in no small way the policy direction of the national union. The National Leadership Seminar held at Botha's Hill in Natal in April 1964, was widely representative, both racially and politically, of South Africa's emergent radical student leadership.¹⁶⁰ Had the recommendations made there been adopted,¹⁶¹ NUSAS would have been positioned on the path to revolution.

7. CONCLUSION

As was seen, the Africanism of the PAC resonated with some Turfloop students during the early and mid-1960s. Within an environment of university apartheid-induced isolation and an ideological milieu that encouraged and fed racially exclusivist thinking, this Africanism flourished and evolved. Following the university authorities' forceful refusal to countenance the student body's affiliation to NUSAS in 1969,¹⁶² pragmatic student leaders, many of them Africanists, realised that Black student contact could only be achieved outside NUSAS. At a conference of Black student leaders at Mariannhill in December 1968, Turfloop student leaders, many of them PAC adherents,

158 Interview: Author with H Kleinschmidt, telephonically, 3 October 2014. RE: NUSAS.

159 UCT, LMNA, BC586, U2: Jonty Driver - Martin [Legassick] and James [Whyte], 17 April 1964 (letter); A2.1: Maeder Osler - Dave [Adler], 30 March 1965 (letter).

160 Interview: Author with M Osler, telephonically, 8 December 2014. RE: NUSAS; Email: G Williams to Author, 26 November 2014. RE: NUSAS; C Driver, "NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)", p. 14.

161 "NUSAS: A paper by CJ Driver delivered to NUSAS National Seminar, 1964". In: UCT, LMNA, BC586, B1: Presidential Report, 1964.

162 *Varsity*, 11 June 1969.

readily endorsed the controversial proposal to create a new, exclusively Black student organisation.¹⁶³ Additionally, given that the Turfloop SRC financed the launch of SASO,¹⁶⁴ held at Turfloop in July 1969, and that Turfloop ASUSA loyalists had attempted to resuscitate ASUSA, it is not implausible to suggest that for Turfloop ASUSA loyalists, SASO was a quasi-reincarnation of ASUSA and a new home for their evolving Africanism.

In conclusion, student politics at Turfloop were shaped by the ideological provisions of university apartheid legislation. Nonetheless, Turfloop students were not the docile Bantustan-orientated subjects desired by university apartheid ideologues. On the contrary, Black students at Turfloop and elsewhere played a leading role in the radicalisation of NUSAS. Moreover, Turfloop student activity demonstrates that the early 1960s was an important and formative period in the development of later Black student activism and thought. Thus, this study contributes to a growing body of literature on student politics at black institutions of higher learning as well as on SASO, the BCM and NUSAS.

163 Gerhart, *Black politics in South Africa*, p. 261.

164 Heffernan, *Limpopo's legacy*, p. 42.