

Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to underscore postcolonial approaches that undercut racial inequities as they foster racial equality and inclusivity at higher institutions of learning, especially in racialised spaces in South Africa.

Design/methodology/approach

This article dwells on whistleblowing as a channel of demythologising Whiteness in South African universities. While the #RhodesMustFall movement at University of Cape Town enjoyed much critical attention, concurrent movements in other universities such as Open Stellenbosch movement did not. This could be attributable to the methods used, especially whistleblowing, an unorthodox method employed to radically question university symbols, to disrupt racial superiority. In revisiting the movement's campaigns, the article specifically highlights Kylie Thomas' whistleblowing to underscore the role of humanities in fostering social transformation beginning with spaces of knowledge production such as universities.

Findings

The research found that challenging apartheid murals and monuments on South African institutions of higher learning required aggressive but creative approaches. This called for unmasking foundations of White supremacy. Whistle blowing and activism against White supremacy boldly confronted apartheid legacies that appear to be well preserved.

Research limitations/implications

The research is limited to the 2015 South African student movements. The emphasis is on Open Stellenbosch movement which has received lesser critical attention compared to #RhodesMustFall. It envisions equality, diversity and inclusion in learning institutions which is achievable only through robust activist approaches to institutional/systemic racism in the institutions, rather than armchair theorising.

Originality/value

This article examines ways in which unorthodox methods such as whistleblowing and activism work to disrupt regimented White supremacy in an institution of higher learning founded on racist ethos.