Universities in Crisis:

A reflection on the African Experience

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Mr Chairman, Mr Vice-Chancellor, the President of the SRC, Colleagues, Students, Friends:

I am grateful to the University and the SRC for giving me this opportunity to reflect on a topic which is both timely and important. When I received your invitation to give the annual lecture on "academic freedom", I was mulling over the situation at the University of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. The script seemed familiar. A student demonstration was confronted by armed soldiers; seventeen students were killed. Forty-two professors and lecturers protested; they were dismissed for signing a petition asking for a public inquiry into the killing of students. And then the rest of staff was asked to reapply for their posts - so those successful may be reemployed on two-year contracts! An extreme situation in a small far-away African country, some may say. I didn't think so. The events in Addis set me thinking about the contents of this paper. In another week, I found myself witness to a number of meetings and actions at UDW, the university I am currently visiting, called to protest the military and police occupation of the University of Bophuthatswana. You may still say: ah, it doesn't concern us, this is just a "homeland" university, closer to "Africa" than to us.

The surest way to stop learning is to exceptionalize phenomena.

I know that there is a strong undercurrent of South African intellegintsia, white and black, left and right. But I also know that at times like these, times of transition, established truths are often open to question. Thus my decision to bring to you some of our experiences and to explore their relevance to your situation.

I have been asked to reflect on these issues on two previous occasions: once at the UDUSA National Conference in 1992, and the other time at the University of Fort Hare, this January. Both times I did so in light of the experience of African universities, particularly those where I have spent most of my teaching life, Makerere University and the University of Dar-es-Salaam. I believed then, and still do, that there are no absolute and universal answers to these dilemmas, that they must be resolved contextually. Is it possible to speak of university autonomy and academic freedom without considering the demand that intellectuals be accountable? Or underline the quest for quality and excellence without which university life loses much of its significance, without heeding the call that university activity be relevant to the needs of the society whose resources nourish it? Being a newcomer to South Africa, I then hesitated to explore the resonance that our experience may have for you. I suppose I believed in the old maxim of Mao Tse-Tung: "No investigation, no right to speak." Today, however, I intend to combine my reflections on our experience with my observations on your situation. Having been in the country three times, almost five months this time, I believe you would expect no less of me.

The point of contextualizing discussion needs to be made over and again. After all, the most interesting and controversial issues in rights theory arise less so when a right is being formualted in the abstract, more so when it is asserted in practice. Does the fact that we support the right to divorce mean that we should support every application for divorce? Does our support for the right of free speech mean that we must support every exercise of that right? Even if that free speech is racist, or sexist? Is not freedom from racist and sexist harassment also a right? When two rights conflict, which should prevail? It would be foolish to try and answer these questions outside of context.

Autonomy and Accountability

Let me illustrate the point by an example from the actual history of African universities. And let me preface that example with a brief historical sketch. In equitorial Africa, that land mass between the Sahara and the Limpopo, universities were a rare phenomenon in the colonial period. Take the example of Nigeria, a country in which live a quarter of the population of this continent. At the end of the colonial period, there was one university in Nigeria with a thousand students, the University of Ibadan. By 1990, Nigeria had 31 universities with 141,000 students. And Nigeria is not an exception. The whole of East Africa had a single university at independence: Makerere University in Kampala. When I last counted, there were fifteen universities in East Africa.

My example is from Makerere University, the university I come from. At independence, the academic staff of Makerere was sharply divided, between a senior expatriate staff and a junior local staff. The expatriates called for the university to be autonomous, free from direct state interference. The local staff was just as firm that, as a national asset, the state had a responsibility to give the university a national character. The expatriates stood in defence of academic freedom, the locals wanted the state to override senior expatriate staff and appoint locals to leading positions in the university, and generally to facilitate and oversee the implementation of a vigorous affirmative action programme at the university.

We the locals prevailed, at least in the short run. The state, we said, is the custodian of the development process and the university an institution that must train human resources for development. It then seemed natural to us that the state play a key role in managing the university. That was easily achieved. The university staff was Africanised in a matter of a few years. In another few, the civil service was also Africanized. Henceforth, a student could no longer be guaranteed a government job, a car loan and a bungalow upon graduation. Lecturers were confronted with a government-appointed Vice Chancellor, government-appointed Deans and government-appointed Heads of Departments. We were now ready to discover the importance of rights, of university autonomy, and to question the logic of development, the logic that universities must be managed as if they are apparatuses of the state.

What is the lesson of the story? The expatriates lost the battle because their notion of rights was so exclusive that it ran counter to any notion of justice for those who had been historically excluded on racial grounds. We were right to see that banner of rights as no more than a fig-leaf defending racial privilege, at best an expression of crass professionalism. But we were short-sighted in not seeing beyond that immediate context, in confusing university interests with the interests of its immediate occupants, in not recognising that the language of rights does not have to be a minority language, it can also be a vehicle for defending majority interests.

Before I came to South Africa, I had long forgotten these events and the passions that propelled them. But once here, I recalled them, as I moved from one university to another, giving seminars or meeting colleagues, from UWC to Cape Town to Fort Hare to Wits to Natal, and as I taught for several months at UDW. I gradually came to see a deep institutional divide, between what are called historically white and historically black universities, between historically privileged and historically deprived institutions. Both sides seem keenly aware of an impending transition to a new political order, and both seem to be preparing to defend their separate and even opposed institutional interests in a post-apartheid state, one in the language of university autonomy, the other in the language of redress. One urging the state to leave universities alone, for while they may have historically been white they **are** the current "centres of excellence", the other hoping for a democratic state to redress the balance between resource-rich and resouce-poor universities, an imbalance historically justified on one single ground, that the former were white and the latter black. I wondered to what extent the essence of the post-independence conflict at Makerere was being replayed, this time not within individual universities but between universities, not between expatriates and locals, but between two groups of locals: those historically privileged and those historically deprived. And I wondered to what extent the combined call to defend "centres of excellence" and university autonomy displayed an insensitivity to historical injustice at best and a narrow preoccupation with defending institutional privilege at worst. But I also wondered to what extent the expectation of strong state intervention was shaped by considerations of short-run institutional advantage which would leave the same institutions open to state control in the medium run. Above all, I have often wondered: Are you condemned to suffer a replay of the old Africa script or are you in a position to learn from our experience? I shall return to this question after a

fuller reflection on our experience.

For the story of the African university, even this particular story, does not end where I left it off. By the late 1970s, the world economy was beginning a downturn. As we used to say then, if they coughed in London, New York or Paris, we would sneeze across Africa. And we did. Through the 80s export revenues declined; the budgetary crisis of the state deepened. Faced with growing deficits, one African state after another capitulated to the harsh regime or Structural Adjustment as defined by the International Monetary Fund. Soon, the World Bank stepped in to restructure higher education. At a meeting with African Vice Chancellors in Harare in 1986, the World Bank argued that higher education in Africa was a luxury: that most African countries were better off closing universities at home and training graduates overseas. The thrust of the Bank's logic ran as follows: that education is an investment like any other, foolish to make unless the returns are profitable. Recognizing that its call for a closure of universities was politically unsustainable, the Bank subsequently modified its agenda, calling for universities to be trimmed and restructured to produce only those skills which the market demands. Such was its agenda for university restructuring in Nigeria in the late 80s. The market logic of the World Bank turned out to be even narrower and shorter-run than the development logic of the state. But then, in the late 80s, that state was also in the process of transormation. With the spread of Structural Adjustment Programmes, it was rapidly changing from being a buffer to globalization to being the agent of globalization.

For us, the period of university expansion was long over, and the period of university crisis had set in. Faced with new pressures, this time of both the state and the market, of both government and donors, the response of academics was to call for academic freedom and university autonomy. For the first time, academics from across the continent rallied together in defense of academic freedom. That was in November, 1990 at the symposium of "academic freedom" in Kampala. Organised by CODESRIA, the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa, we came from every ideological stripe, from the left to the right, from staff unions and student organisations. Faced with a common dilemma, we had discovered a common interest. In return for popular support for academic freedom and university autonomy, we pledged accountability to popular movements. But who would support us in that quest, at such a late hour? Had we not ourselves, only yesterday, argued against university autonomy as a thin veil cloaking privilege and called on the state to remove that veil, and redress injustice? But I suspect the reasons for popular indifference to our plea for help, and our pledge for solidarity, ran deeper.

To understand that reason, we need to explore the very nature of African universities, not only the few established by colonial powers, but also the many set up after independence.

Quality and Relevance

There is a popular African-American saying: the hardest act to understand is your own. Understanding our own act took some time. The participants of the Kampala Symposium were battle-hardened. In the face of growing authoritarianism and an all-embracing market logic, we had fought many a battle but we could not remember any we had won. Perhaps our only victory was that we had survived! But that same confrontation was a source of self-knowledge because through it we discovered our weaknesses and our isolation. We could neither find alternative sources of funding to make up for shrinking state subsidies, nor effective allies in the struggle for autonomy.

Driven into a corner, we discovered local communities, communities which we had hitherto viewed simply as so many natural settings. Forced to address these communities, we were compelled to look at ourselves from the standpoint of these communities. We came to realise that universities have little relevance to the communities around us. To them, we must appear like potted plants in green houses - of questionable aesthetic value - or mere anthropological oddities with curious habits and strange dresses, practitioners of some modern witchcraft.

To academics accustomed to seeing ourselves as leaders-in-waiting or students accustomed to be cajoled as the leaders of tomorrow, these were indeed harsh realities. We were forced to understand the question of relevance, not simply narrowly from the point of view of the development logic of the state, or the even narrower market logic of the IMF and the World Bank, but broadly from the point of view of the needs of surrounding communities. But we had always resisted any demand for a broad relevance in the name of maintaining quality. Faced with popular pressures for democracy in education universities and independent states were determined, not only to preserve intact those universities inherited from colonial mentors butr also to reproduce replicas several times over to maintain standards.

The new post-independence African University was triumphantly universalistic and uncompromisingly foreign. We made no concession to local culture. None! We stood as custodians of standards in outposts of civilization. Unlike our counterparts in Asia and Latin America, we did not even speak the cultural language of the people. The language of the university was either English, or French or Portuguese. As in the affairs of the state, the discourse of universities also took place in a language that the vast majority of working people could not even understand. There was a linguistic curtain that shut the people out.

None of this was an accident. All of it

flowed from a historical process set into motion with colonial occupation. Let us remember that formal education on this continent was a state initiative. Schools and universities were never created by communities; rather, they were extension of the state. While they enrolled children of the colonized, their self-declared mission was to uproot these children from their communities. They sought not to transmit to students a sense of the history of their communities, but the erase any trace of that history. Against the "backwardness" that local communities were said to signify, schools and universities claimed to hold the torch of "progress". Liten to the words of a peasant woman from nothern Uganda whose husband was recruited into one of these schools, words immortalized in Okot p' Bitek's *Song of Lawino:*

Bile burns my inside
I feel like vomiting!
For all our young men
Were finished in the forest
Their manhood was finished
In the classrooms
Their testicles
Were smashed
With large books!

Through this educational system were trained the cadres of "civilization" who came to organise political life in most independent African states after independence. Is it surprising that they cast as a state agenda what they had been taught to accept as the mission of the educational system: to bring "development" to "backward" communities, not to capitulate to them in the name of "democracy"? That some of the most militant of them came to believe in the notion of "revolution from above", a notion of radical change that must be forced down reluctant community throats? Is it then surprising that when it came time to take over colonial universities, we deracialized them but failed to decolonize them? That we changed the personnel of these institutions, but not the nature of the institutions themselves?

I do not wish to romanticize communities and demonize universities. But I am arguing against the reverse tendency, a one-sided proposition that glorifies the mission of universities as fountains of an enlightened universalism and debases communities as repositories of an unenlightened parochialism. It is a tendency that is entrenched across this continent, and if my short experience here is any guide, more so in this country than in any other part of the continent I am familiar with.

It is a proposition which is sanctified by a sophisticated notion that science and technology are essentially apolitical pursuits whose objectives must be set internally, by scientists and technicians. That any external input in shaping the agenda of scientific research is an interference which must necessarily compromise the integrity of scientific work. Ironically, the thesis that the objectives of scientific inquiry are internally generated, that the demands of rigorous scientific work rule out any meaningful choice, allows scientists to absolve themselves of responsibility for both the direction of scientific inquiry and the use of its results. Thus scientists can have their cake and eat it too, claim autonomy and disavow accountability.

The notion of a "Republic of Science", autonomous and unaccountable, had its origins in discussions on natural science policy in early 1960s in Europe. But it is a notion largely discredited, for the simple reason that nowhere in the world does Fundamental Research guide the activity of more than a tiny minority of researchers. Not only do the resources needed to finance scientific work have to be justified in competition with other resource needs of the society at large, it is a fact that most researchers are engaged in activities whose objectives are economic or social, rather than scientific per se. If this is true, then the question arises: science for what? Who is to set the agenda of research? The scientists themselves or the communities whose sacrifice represents the resources for scientific work? Or some combination? The real question we should be debating is not whether universities should be absolved of accountability, but to whom they should be accountable.

It seems to me that, in the South African case, the elitism and irresponsibility of universities in particular, and the scientific community in general, is reinforced by a second factor. This is the actual objectives that have historically guided the development of science, narrowly conceived simultaneously to serve the perceived security needs of the white minority and the needs of state security to suppress the black majority. In the midst of all the talk of a transition to a "new" South Africa, I have found the legacy of that history to be very much alive and well. I have found researchers across the board, with always a few notable exceptions, sharing the myopic vision that South Africa is a member of the white industrialized world, except with a large poor population. In discussions that explore a possible future, whether for education or the economy, I have found constant references to Western Europe or North America. But, viewed from the point of view of the totality of the South African population, South Africa is not an industrialized European country, but a developing African country with a minority whose European living standards are at the the expense of a majority whose living circumstances are more African than anything else. Yes , South Africa is not Uganda, but it is certainly more like Algeria than Holland or England. For those who can not do without a European parallel, it resembles more Hungary or Czechoslovakia, than it does any Western European country.

This myopic vision is not just an attitude that can be changed at will in a short span of time, because it is crystallized in the very nature of institutions that guide education and research in this country. Recently, I had the opportunity to read a survey of institutions of science and technology prepared by an international mission financed by the IDRC of Canada. It is instructive to reflect on some of their findings. I shall take as an example the leading scientific research institution in this country. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR. In spite of its "modern facilities and a tradition of technical competence" the IDRC team found it "least well equipped to deal with the problems of disadvantaged communities." for the CSIR, in the words of the Report, "has no history of experience in conducting research whose specific goals have emerged from long processes of consultation and discussion with disadvantaged communities whose needs are to be met, nor does it have a long tradition of using social science research as a route to the interpretation of the complex dynamics of societies which are dramatically different from those of its rsearchers."

What does it mean to lack a history of research whose goals are not oriented to the needs of disadvantaged communities? The record of the Medical Research Council is illuminating. "What," asks the IDRC Report, "is the public health justification for continued expenditure on research on Biomembranes, on the Cell Biology of Arteriosclerosis, on Inherited skeletal disorders on Transplantation or on Ecogenetics"? Does not the research agenda of the National Accelerator Centre - designed for nuclear physics research and medical research related to proton beam therapy for certain

classes of cancers, but whose 1992-93 budget of 39.1 million Rand is 25% more than the 30.2 million budgeted for the Foundation for Research Development's core programme for support to university research in the natural sciences and engineering - does not this combined agenda reflect "an intensely political choice"? I could go on quoting from the IDRC findings, but I think the point is made.

We also made similar decisions, but on a lesser scale, not only because the resources at our disposal were modest, but I suspect also because we were not victims of a racism as intense as here, one that so completely dehumanized and debased the needs of the majority in the eyes of a research and university establishment drawn mainly from the privileged minority. But when we did make similar choices, we also defended them on grounds of "pursuing excellence" and "standards". The discourse on "excellence" and "standards" in our case, as I fear in yours, had a strong ideological dimension. Before I explain it, let me emphasize that I believed then, and still do today, that mediocrity is not our quest. Universities must be centres of excellence. And yet, what we have come to realize after a long and tortuous journey, is that in chanting a one-dimensional song about excellence and standards we fell prey to a right-wing tradition. It is a tradition that argues that quantity is always at the expense of quality, that democracy is always at the expense of excellence. But, could the opposite be true? Could the opposition between quality and quantity, between democracy and excellence, be relative and conditional, rather than absolute and unconditional? Could the demand to "maintain quality" be a figleaf for maintaining privilege? Could the call for "defending standards" be a demand for conformity? And could the combined call by universities to "maintain quality" and "defend standards" be an agenda for continuing to be unaccountable to the disadvantaged majority in society?

The irony about defining quality and standards in international and universalistic terms, outside of the context we live in, was that precisely when universities were under the greatest threat, we were unable to defend our carefully nurtured "centres of excellence". Not only because the communities we lived amongst had so little reason to defend us, but also because we were deserted by our own colleagues when the going got rough. That desertion rate is measured as the "brain drain". In our singleminded pursuit to create centres of learning and research of international standing, we had nurtured researchers and educators who had little capacity to work in surrounding communities but who could move to any institution in any industrialized country, and serve any privileged community around the globe, with comparative ease. In our failure to contextualize standards and excellence to the needs of our own people, to ground the very process and agenda of learning and research in our conditions, we ended up creating an intelligentsia with little stamina for the very process of development whosw vanguard we claimed to be. Like birds who cross oceans when the weather turns adverse, we had little depth and grounding, but maximum reach and mobility. So that, when the going got rough, we got going - across borders. Faced with a growing brain drain, some African governments turned to the stick, to outright coercion; others, with much prodding by international donors, turned to the carrot, simultaneously trimming universities while upping the priviliges of those who had survived the process. But none questioned the very nature of the institutions we had created and sustained.

Individual Access and Institutional Reform

It is not that African universities sleepwalked through the morrow of independence. Not that there were no reforms; there were. The limits of that reform were the limits of affirmative action. For affirmative action meant Africanizing or localizing the staff and decision-making processes. But a change in occupants does not necessarily change the institution concerned. In fact, the reverse happened: through affirmative action, colonial-type institutions were able to get a new lease of life, a reinforced legitimacy, and fortify themselves against pressures for a change in orientation and purpose.

Once again, I hear echoes of our experience in the South African universities. Is it not true that most universities, faced with a demand for change, are coming up with an agenda for improved access, and no more? Deracialization is an important demand, but we must be clear about its limits. For deracialization is not the same as decolonisation. Without institutional reform, affirmative action will be turned into a survival strategy of privileged institutions, a last line of defense of the old order. To be turned into a first line of attack on that order, it has to be joined to an agenda of institutional reform, not only of individual institutions, but of the entire institutional landscape in higher education.

Let me return to the tension between the historically white and the historically black universities in this country to address this question a little more concretely. In the very first month that I spent at UDW, although I did not know most of the people at the university, I felt a great sense of familiarity. Soon, I realised its source to be the problems and obstacles I would ordinarily run into. I felt I was back at the Makerere that I knew, a colonial-type institution with a legacy of

heavy-handed administration, summed up in an ethos that administrative efficiency must be their overriding objective, even if the institution they run happens to be academic. Soon, I came to meet those in charge, whether in the Rector's office, or in the leadership of the staff union or the SRC. I now felt even more familiar, because I recognised that the colonial legacy was alive and well, just as it had been at the Makerere I taught at in the 1980s. All concerned were militantly opposed to apartheid and committed to eradicating its legacy, but many continued to harbour the kernel of that legacy as part of their militant consciousness, but without recognizing it. That kernel was the conviction that change must come through a "revolution from above". I came to recognise this at the other HBUs I visited. While at one, a well-intentioned Rector had actually attempted a "revolution from above", at another the Rector in question was actually being blamed by militants in the staff association and the SRC for not affecting a "revolution from above"!

But as I got the opportunity to give seminars at historically white universities, meet lecturers and researchers, and even make some friendships, I came to realize a paradox: that the relations of domination were actually much more transparent at historically black universities lacking in a tradition of university autonomy and internal democracy, but were far more concealed at liberal white universities with a tradition of university autonomy and internal democracy. For if the historically black universities were more obviously state-driven, their white institutional counterparts were less obviously but just as completely capital-driven. And yet, as institutions, both were equally distant from the needs of the disadvantaged majority around them, only that researchers at historically black universities saw this as the result of a state imposition, whereas many at historically white universities defended it as a rational choice, part of the historical mission of universities. Not surprisingly, the resistance to institutional reform embedded in the ideology of "pursuing excellence" and "maintaining standards" was much more pervasive at the liberal white universities. So that while the historically black universities seemed much more open to reform, even if less clear about what that reform may entail, those at historically white universities seemed neither open nor clear about the nature of a much needed reform.

At UDW, I was asked to teach an honours course in philosophy and political science. Many well-intentioned colleagues, both within the university and outside it, warned my about the lack of preparedness of the students, and prepared me to encounter lower standards than what I may be used to "internationally." The three months I spent with the students began as a tug-of-war. I refused to accept anything less than what I would anywhere else, but was prepared to negotiate the pace and the path by which we may come to that goal. For I believed I had not been brought to UDW as a referee whose job was to tag every student with the skills they possessed as they came into my class, but was really expected to be a teacher who would embark on a common journey of exploration, discovery and learning, who was supposed to leave them better than I found them. I was pleasantly surprised. The students were as excellent and as uneven as anywhere else I have taught, whether in Uganda or Tanzania or USA. But you wouldn't know that if you just gave them a performance test at the outset. For a test which ignores all differences in circumstance and treats everyone as equals is itself highly loaded. How, after all, do you compare someone who runs a mile in six minutes on hilly terrain and another who does so in four minutes in a manicured stadium?

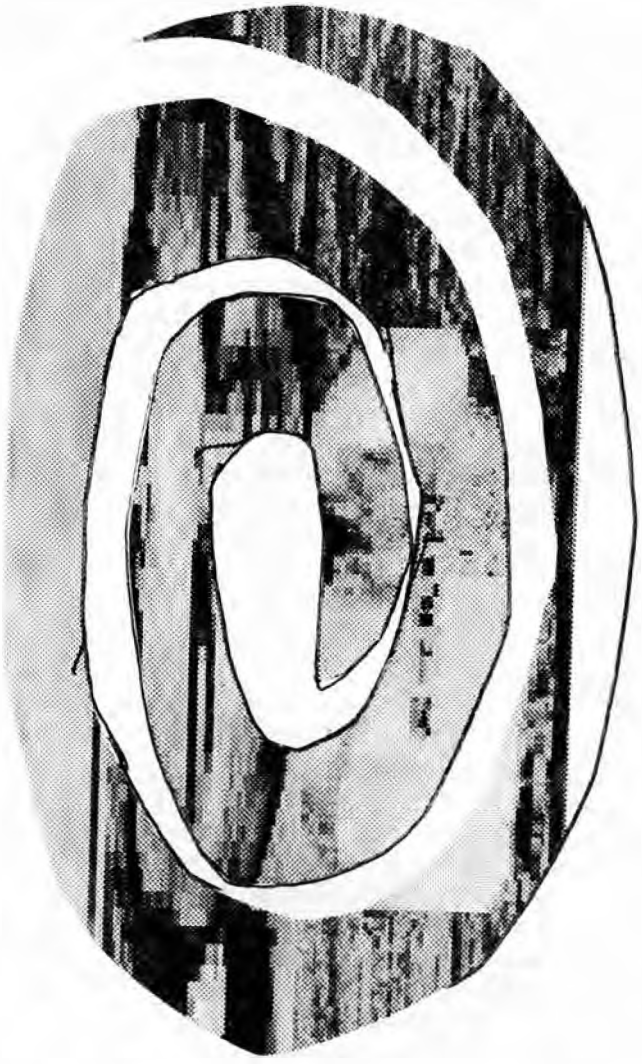
My point is this. In the apartheid era, the historically black universities were subject to a double restriction: they were both resource starved and racially cordoned off. The result was that while they were always starved of financial resources, they were not equally starved of human resources. For the racial cordon applied to both those with talent and tenacity, and those with less of it. That, however, will no longer be the case if the oncoming reform in higher education is limited to deracialization and improved access. For if the racial cordon is lifted and access to historically white universities improved, and that reform considered reason enough to continue their privileged access to resources - in other words, if the racial cordon is lifted and the differential access to financial resources continues - the result will be that the resource deprivation of historically balck universities will actually worsen. Not only will they be starved of financial resources as they were in the past, they will also be in danger of losing the best of their human resources which were yesterday closetted because they were black even if talented, but are today being looked for like needles in a haystack by white university scouts precisely because they are black and talented, and even better if female. Unless the entire institutional landscape is reformed, the other side of improved access to historically white universities will be a brain drain from historically black universities. And I dare say that the situation will be no different in other fields, such as housing. American social historians tell us that Harlem did not become a ghetto until the black middle class started moving out because of improved access to hitherto white suburbs. For, until then, Harlem was much more of an organically differentiated and integrated community, home to middle class as to poor, to professional as to menial. If post-apartheid South Africa can deliver no more than improved access in housing, Soweto will surely go the way of Harlem!

How does one ensure that the post-apartheid reform does not enrich the suburbs of Johannesburg and simultaneously ghettoise Soweto further, or, to stick to the subject of my talk, privilege liberal white universities further? In answering this question, I must necessarily be modest, and cut the cloth to suit my experience. I cannot put before you a comprehensive agenda but I can put before you some proposals the essence of which, I believe, should be a part of that agenda.

I have argued that there must be a radical shift in vision, from the notion that South Africa is a white industrialized country with racial problems, somewhat more acute than the United States, to a vision that South Africa is actually a developing African country. A change in vision is not possible without a change in those who define that vision. In the case of universities, these are Councils. I would argue that, at the minimum, there needs to be a restructuring of Governing Councils so as to give meaningful representation to four different groups: one, the academic community, of teachers, researchers and students; two, disadvantaged communities; three, the productive sector; and four, the state.

If you want me to put it in the language of affirmative action and redress, then I am arguing that the reform has to be carried out at three levels, not just one as seems to the dominant perspective. It should, first of all, be an affirmative action within institutions, designed to bring in more black and female faces, not just in the student body, but also in the teaching and research staff, the administration and the Governing Councils. One needs to recognise that, of these, the complexion of the student body is the easiest to change and the most difficult to sustain, especially if different shades come from different socio-economic backgrounds. I re-

member being a student at Harvard in the late 60's when two great democratic movements came to a head, the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement. Bowing to popular pressure, Harvard admitted more and more Black students through a combination of financial aid and affirmative action. But I also remember returning a decade later, in a changed environment where the democratic movement had demobilized and the economy was on a downturn. Harvard then pleaded scarcity of resources and scaled down its financial assistance for the disadvantaged. The complexion of the student body changed once again, shifting like pendulum, to lighter shades.



Secondly, affirmative action needs to involve a redress between institutions so that the resource disparity between historically white and historically black universities will not end up being reproduced, even worsened, under other labels, say a distinction between national and regional universities, or one between research-oriented and teaching-oriented universities. In other words, one should stop thinking in apartheid terms, of a few national universities lavishly endowed, and other not, but start thinking of national facilities deliberately and evenly spread between universities, historically white and historically black. And it should, thirdly involve a redress for the majority but historically disadvantaged communities whose sweat and blood has indirectly built the facilities at all universities, and who must now be guaranteed a meaningful representation in defining the needs that should shape the agenda of research and teaching at all institutions. If we take this seriously, we must then speak not only of redefining the role of all existing universities, but also of building new facilities that specifically aim to link the work of higher education and research institutions to the needs of the previously excluded majority. After all, of any country on this continent, it is South Africa which has the greatest experience in carrying out this type of triple redress, only that in the past it was carried out not in the interest of the black majority, but of what was then a relatively deprived Afrikaner minority. To have a sense of history, after all, is to realize that there is no experience, no matter how oppressive, which can be dismissed, simply and one-sidedly.

One last word. The real point of democratic reform, what I have been calling institutional reform, is not just to change the complexion of researchers, teachers and students, nor just to change the location of research and teaching; to be truly meaningful, reform has to lead to a change in the orientation of these activities. Let me take a hypothetical example, one where you succeed in adding more black and female faces to the research and teaching establishment, and even to shifting the location of that establishment mainly to historically black universities - say your most advanced medical research facilities come to be located at the University of Fort Hare, with researchers mainly black and female, but the facility is still oriented to proton beam research for special types of cancer, away from the public health needs of the people - what will you have achieved? I dare say you would then have joined the ranks of independent Africa. The key issue will still remain not addressed: who should centres of research and learning serve and how? This is why I think the real challenge for all of us, whether south or north of the Limpopo, whether black or brown, yellow or white, is to begin thinking of how to root African universities in African soil.