Article

Do African Lives Matter to Black Lives Matter? Youth Uprisings and the Borders of Solidarity

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Abstract
Despite experiencing a proliferation of youth-led mobilizations in recent years, Africa remains peripheral to the analysis of the U.S.-centered Movement for Black Lives (M4BL). This article explores points of convergence and tension between African uprisings and the M4BL, with a focus on two movements at the intersection of education and activism: Nigerian "Occupy" protests and the "Fees Must Fall" movement in South Africa. Ultimately, I make the case for more engagement on the part of U.S. scholars and activists with struggles in Africa and other global contexts, in the interest of research and solidarity practices that value Black lives everywhere.

Introduction

Do African lives matter to Black Lives Matter? Since 2005, more than 100 large-scale uprisings have materialized across Africa in more than 40 countries,

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with the majority of these mobilizations emerging after 2012. Like the assemblage of local and national struggles that have constituted the Movement For Black Lives (M4BL)[1] in the United States over the same period, contemporary protests in Africa are predominantly youth-led, urban, technology-activated, and converge around state grievances, social inequalities, and, increasingly, revolutionary transformation. Yet, Africa is consistently absent from the analysis and explicit concerns of the M4BL, despite similarly being in the midst of an upsurge of popular resistance. In this article, I explore recent uprisings in Africa and question why, in a moment that so emphatically affirms the consequence of Black life, U.S. scholars and activists afford such cursory attention to coeval struggles in Africa and other international contexts of Black resistance.

As an entry point into these questions, my discussion focuses on a critical axis of contemporary political movements in both the United States and Africa—youth activism in schools and around educational issues. In the United States, the growing incidence of student protests around institutionalized anti-blackness has positioned schools as a key battleground of the M4BL.[2] So also on the African continent, the campus has (re-)emerged as a catalyst for mobilizations against the changing demographic and socioeconomic conditions that produce youth animus toward political elites. As examples of these dynamics, I introduce two instructive cases of activism at the intersection of education and popular struggle: "Occupy" protests in cities and campuses in Nigeria, and the "Fees Must Fall" (FMF) student movement in South Africa, which represent bourgeoning trajectories of youth activism on the continent. Although my analysis in this article narrows specifically on points of convergence and tension between political movements in Africa and the M4BL, my broader intention is to assert the consequence of transnational considerations within the M4BL, and how its current geographic particularism undercuts the potentiality of this moment and movement. Reflecting on the responsibilities of a more geopolitically inclusive framework of praxis, ultimately, I make the case for more meaningful engagement with contemporary scholarship and struggles in Africa and other global contexts, in the interest of research and solidarity practices that have as their aim the full valuation of Black lives everywhere.

African Youth Rising Up

The M4BL and the African youth mobilizations I examine in this article should both be understood as part of a broad escalation of youth-led revolt over the past decade. Anti-austerity protests in Europe and North America, global Occupy movements, the Arab Awakening, anti-corruption protests in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and, our concern, the M4BL, have all shifted

mass action and fundamental critiques of capitalism, structuralized oppressions, liberal democracy, and white supremacy to the fore. In some cases, these movements prefigured alternative ways of imagining sociality and sociopolitical formations, including acephalous, or leaderless, organizational structures, direct democratic processes, and cooperative economic institutions (Graeber, 2009; Maeckelbergh, 2011; Murray, 2014; Taylor, 2016). Youth in Africa are implicated in these radical forms of resistance by a new generation of activists. However, their particular experiences are rarely engaged substantively[3] in analyses of the political "awakening" of global youth (Staeheli & Nagel, 2013), who, until this recent wave of grassroots activisms, were too often characterized as apolitical, apathetic, and disconnected from conventional forms of political participation (e.g., Eliasoph, 1998; Farthing, 2010; Sloam, 2007). Since 2005, African youth have waged more than 100 popular uprisings in more than 40 countries across the continent.[4] These struggles were instigated primarily by an "urban underclass" of un- or under-employed youth around state grievances related to economic precarity, corruption, and anti-incumbency (Branch & Mampilly, 2015, p. 9).

The proliferation of such forms of agitation is a rational consequence of material realities in Africa, which continue to lock young people, in particular, out of social, economic, and political power. Rapid demographic changes over the past three decades have produced the largest, fastest growing youth population in the world, with roughly 70% of the continent's total population under the age of 30 (Lin, 2012). Yet, despite forming a demographic majority and inheriting improved access to education and participatory forms of democracy, young people remain socially marginalized by elderly leaders, who are often ill-informed about the priorities of young people and reluctant to implement youth-centered government policies (Sommers, 2011). According to recent data, three in five young workers in Africa lack the levels of education required for participation in the labor market, resulting in long-term unemployment that peaked in 2014 at a staggering rate of 48.1% (International Labour Organization, 2015). Scholars of Africa have written extensively about these challenges youth face in the wake of civil war, military regimes, neoliberal economic reforms, and foreign aid dependencies, all of which disproportionately and adversely affect young people (e.g., Argenti, 2007; Caffentzis & Federici, 2001; Cruse O'Brien, 1996; Honwana & De Boeck, 2005; Richards, 1998; Urdal, 2004). Moreover, the sense among young people that older generations have failed them is a central source of upheaval on the continent, as demonstrated by the rising frequency of uprisings aimed at deposing "sit-tight" leaders in several nations, including Tunisia (2011), Egypt (2011), Burkina Faso (2014), Democratic Republic of Congo (2015), and Burundi (2015).[5]

The underlying causes and motivations of these expressions of disaffection have been the subject of considerable attention over the past two decades. Some of this scholarship, framed around discourses of "youth violence" (see Bay & Donham, 2007, pp. 16-33), understands the participation of African youth in "riots" and seemingly spontaneous episodes of violence as non-ideological and lacking any coherent political aspirations or projects (e.g., El-Kenz, 1996; Kaplan, 1994). Alternatively, an expanding body of literature, whose perspective I share, takes seriously the intentionality of African youth uprisings—namely, to disrupt the social order, even if temporarily. This literature recognizes the possibility within rebellion of "passionate idealism," which utilizes violence strategically to deliver the failed promises of liberation and dignity that were thought to be underwritten by elders, the state, and institutions such as schools, but which have failed to materialize (Bozzoli, 2007, p. 184; see also Diouf, 2003; Honwana & De Boeck, 2005; Philipps, 2013). Although youth resistance on the continent appears to be transforming into more movement-oriented formations, African uprisings fundamentally unsettle "civil society" models of protest, which tend to only be legible to the extent that they are "organized," "disciplined," and "nonviolent," and articulate coherent political demands upon the state (Branch & Mampilly, 2015, p. 7). In this respect, mobilizations in Africa share with the M4BL an irreverence for establishment (elder) leadership and "respectable" political forms, emblematized in U.S. protests by slogans such as, "This ain't your grandparents' civil rights movement," credited to Ferguson organizer, Tef Poe.

Revolting Education

While youth in Africa attempt to disrupt gerontocratic systems that structurally marginalize them on the basis of their age, they are also with increased regularity revolting against failing educational systems that undermine and privatize the broadly held expectations of the state for (free) public education (Luescher & Klemencic, 2016). These forms of resistance are inflected by the specific contradictions of contemporary African education systems and are also a continuation of the continent's long-standing traditions of student radicalism. Historically, students in Africa have held a vanguard role in anticolonial, anti-military, and anti-imperial political struggles, particularly in higher educational institutions (Zeilig, 2007). Students' movements peaked in the 1980s and early 1990s when international financial institutions, in collaboration with African regimes, sabotaged educational expansion at a time when newly independent nations were undertaking ambitious agendas for national development with education as an instrumental vehicle for social

transformation (Federici, Caffentzis, Alidou, & Caffentzis, 2000). The imposition, then, of austerity reforms, which financially gutted state institutions such as schools, galvanized forms of cooperation among students, peasants, workers, and political opposition. This cooperation is reminiscent of international responses to the more recent 2007-2008 financial crisis, in which young people mobilized against economic precarity through broad movement and coalition building (Hardt & Negri, 2011; Mason, 2013; Tejerina, Perugorría, Benski, & Langman, 2013).

Today, global education, on the whole, has drastically reorganized according to the logics of neoliberal capitalism (Ball, 2012; Hill & Kumar, 2012; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Stromquist & Monkman, 2014). In the United States, neoliberal reform measures have directed dwindling state resources toward corporatized educational models, high-stakes evaluation, and rampant school closures in urban contexts. These transformations are even more pronounced in Africa, which was an early experimental matrix for the disastrous effects of "market-driven" rationalization beginning in the 1980s (Geo-Jaja & Mangum, 2001). More than a quarter century later, to say that education in Africa is in crisis would be a gross understatement. Despite the misconstruction by international development institutions that relative improvements in access, concentrated at the primary level, are indications of educational "progress" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2012), most school-age children and youth in Africa are still underserved and criminally neglected by state officials tasked with providing public services (Emran, Shilpi, & Islam, 2013; Hallak & Poisson, 2001; Pattillo, 2012). Indeed, net enrollment significantly increased at the primary level from 56% to 73% between 1999 and 2007, which amounts to access for an additional 42 million children across the continent.[6] However, continental averages for secondary school enrollment are still the world's lowest at a mere 34%, postsecondary enrollment stands at 6% of the tertiary age population, and Africa makes up 45% of the global population of out-of-school children who have never entered a classroom.[7] Stark discrepancies in access across and within national contexts similarly reveal deep inequalities related to class, gender, rural–urban, regional, ethnic, and language disparities, in addition to vulnerability to conflict and displacement, which further disrupt educational access (Pink & Noblit, 2007). For the children who do gain access to schooling, learning itself takes shape under tremendous constraints given the institutional stress of a bulging youth population and an organizational climate of deskilled teachers, and underfunded, overcrowded institutions. Under these conditions, students in some of the most under-resourced institutions are reported to be scarcely better off than young people who never attended school at all (van Fleet, 2012).

The intractability of such staggering barriers to educational access and learning in Africa are among the reasons school-based issues, such as poor infrastructure and rising costs, so frequently politically escalate and connect to more widely held social grievances. Student agitation, in this context, encompasses a broad range of political action, which is most visible at the postsecondary level,[8] including defiance against authorities, class boycotts, public demonstrations, property vandalism, physical attacks on school personnel, and riots, which sometimes result in serious harm to students and civilians and carry the potential consequence of expulsion, detention, and physical violence from authorities (Akintola, 2010; Aluede, Jimoh, Agwinede, & Omoregie, 2005; Konings, 2002; Nkinyangi, 1991; Zeilig, 2007). These forms of resistance are beginning to produce, anew, sustained movements and activist networks, which challenge social injustices and reflect global trends toward grassroots and technology-activated movement building. I turn, now, to the "Occupy Nigeria" and FMF mobilizations, which exemplify emerging trajectories and configurations of youth activism in schools and concerning education on the continent.

#OccupyNigeria

On New Year's Day 2012, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan removed the 20-year standing government subsidy on petroleum products, which kept fuel prices in Nigeria among the lowest in Africa. With immediate effect, the pump price of petrol more than doubled from 65 Naira (US$0.40) to 141 Naira (US$0.91) per liter, and, as a result, the cost of transportation, market goods, and, thus, everyday life skyrocketed. The subsidy was widely experienced as the only tangible benefit the average Nigerian derives from the country's vast oil wealth, whose profits concentrate in the hands of elites while most citizens subsist under extreme conditions of economic vulnerability. As a result, the drastic policy shift was met with popular disdain and catalyzed nearly 2 weeks of mass protests and acts of disruption in 17 cities around the country, which were reported to be the largest in the nation's history. Street protests were later amplified by a labor strike, a viral social media campaign on Twitter and Facebook, and international protests by Nigerians in the diaspora. Designated "Occupy Nigeria" in the spirit of the Wall Street protests targeting economic inequality and corporate greed, the movement's diverse tactics[9] had as their initial aim the "occupation" of national political space until the government restored the fuel subsidy.

Much of the narrative surrounding Occupy Nigeria emphasizes the unexpectedness of a nationally integrated political movement in a country as notoriously fragmented as Nigeria, particularly after the outbreak of rampant

post-election conflict along ethnic and religious lines just months before in 2011 (International Crisis Group, 2011). Debates concerning the movement also narrowed in on the complex politics of the subsidy itself,[10] which offer a revealing entry point into the dysfunction of Nigeria's oil dependency and broader governance crisis.[11] I understand Occupy Nigeria, alternatively, as the story of a generation of youth coming into an understanding of its own power. Although the labor strike led by older labor officials provided legitimacy to what began as a loose constellation of youth uprisings, the movement was incited and sustained by tens of thousands of nameless young people. The involvement of labor unions in negotiations with the government and the eventual selling out of the movement by union officials, who suspended the labor strike just as the movement began to escalate (Akor, 2014), obscure the range of political claims embedded within Occupy Nigeria and collapse them into purely economic aims tied to the subsidy. In the course of the movement, the priorities of young people, particularly those untethered from formal labor and civil society bodies, expanded from the restoration of the fuel subsidy ("65 Naira or nothing") to more revolutionary demands for transformation, including regime change ("Jonathan must go"). Such claims were largely cultivated away from mainstream media attention and the surveillance of state security agents (pp. 6-7).

I acquired a grassroots view of the political claims and practices of a cohort of youth participants in Occupy Nigeria, as the movement occurred while I was in the midst of 18 months of fieldwork on student politics in higher educational institutions in southwestern Nigeria. On the whole, the students I came to know during this time were engaged in substantive collective deliberations concerning pathways to transfiguring state-society relations and reimagining governance (fieldnotes, January 5, 2012). They asked probing questions about the suitability of alternative paradigms of leadership, similar to Jeffrey and Dyson's (2014) differentiation between "allocative" and "generative" politics, and the desirability of liberal democracy within Nigeria's complicated political landscape. For politically active students, whose protests often focus on issues insular to the institution such as tuition fee hikes and poor campus infrastructure, Occupy Nigeria provided an avenue for students to connect campus activism to broader struggles. Such students organized and supported local demonstrations, and helped strengthen emerging coalitions across civil society and labor. For many, Occupy was their first experience with activism outside of the campus and a critical stride in their development and self-awareness as political leaders. Those who were not directly involved in street protests and organizing participated in media-making practices via social media. Helping to foster what has been described as a local "citizen journalism movement" (Sowore, 2013), young people

equipped with mobile phones circulated their own accounts of the uprising on Facebook, Twitter, and BlackBerry Messenger, and analyzed various sites of struggle in real time. Shifting new media technology to the center of Nigeria's political culture, these techno-social practices represent emerging arenas for young people to politically experiment and "renegotiate their place and space with patterns of authority and control" (Iwilade, 2013, p. 1). This is because, unlike the other spheres of political life (e.g., political parties, state bureaucracy) where young Nigerians depend on the permission and resources of elders for access, within the media cultures related to new media technologies, young people occupy positions of authority and influence.

Still, Occupy Nigeria has been cast in some quarters as a failure due to the movement's achievement of only a fractional restoration of the fuel subsidy (e.g., Rewaju, 2013; Shehu, 2013), which is a perspective I find limiting due to its erasure of the continued significance of Occupy Nigeria for young people. In their recent work on contemporary protests in Africa, Branch and Mampilly (2015) advocate for an analytical approach to African political struggles beyond such discourses of success and failure. The success/failure binary diminishes the less conspicuous forms of political work that thrive in popular struggles such as Occupy Nigeria, even when they do not achieve their demands. The authors argue that a protest be judged by "how it attempts to transform the national political questions that structure state power" and according to "the evolving political imaginations forged by divergent forces involved in African protests and with the efforts made to transcend the structural dilemmas out of which protest is born" (p. 10). From this perspective, Occupy marks a fundamental shift in the political imagination of youth, who are otherwise sidelined from meaningful participation in national politics by gerontocratic, neo-patrimonial power groups (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2013; Joseph, 1987).

Months after the end of Occupy Nigeria, in April 2012, students at the University of Ibadan, one of the institutions where I conducted research, launched a series of protests over the course of 3 days. Students branded these demonstrations "Occupy University of Ibadan" after days of blackouts in the period leading up to final examinations, which undermined their ability to carry out their academic responsibilities and routine aspects of everyday life. Borrowing from the activist toolkit of the national protests in their mobilization of social media and the "shutting down" of campus and commercial activity in the vicinity, students brought international media attention to the intolerable conditions of public universities in Nigeria, where power blackouts and water shortages are common (Ojiego, 2012). Like Occupy Nigeria, the occupation of the university ended prematurely without the promise of improved conditions, due to the forced closure of the campus by administrators. From their homes,

students reflected on their latest occupation via a campus Facebook group, of which I was a member. Professing a common sentiment concerning the transformative possibilities of the renewed Occupy movement, one student posted the following message:

> God bless those who invented OCCUPY. Look at how easy it was to pass our message across the WORLD without a single form of violence. . . . At least after Occupying [University of Ibadan], I can now Occupy my HOUSE. Maybe if OCCUPY ASO ROCK [the presidential villa] is needed, I [will join]. So OCCUPY this life 'til you die, so that you can OCCUPY your COFFIN without REGRETS. (Posted by Gbenga on April 28, 2012)

Although University of Ibadan students were certainly demoralized by the decision of authorities to suppress their protest, particularly after a similar climax to Occupy Nigeria, this statement is representative of one of the ways students gave meaning to occupation as a political praxis, after participating in national protests.

According to the post, even without dramatic and measurable results, occupation taught this student important political lessons. Most relevant to the discussion here, the experience gave the student a new sense of self-worth and a sense that they could, in the future, claim a different place in Nigeria: in domestic spaces, in spaces of gerontocratic authority, and in life. Occupy Nigeria appears to have a continued afterlife after the 2012 national protests, as "Occupy" persists as the lexicon of choice for political action among young Nigerians, most recently refashioned in April 2016 as "Occupy Nigeria Season 2" (Sahara Reporters, 2016). Where Occupy Nigeria is a case study of the ways in which participation in popular struggles roused in young people an understanding of their power, deepening youth resistance in social spaces including educational institutions, #FeesMustFall shows the reverse trajectory: how a movement that explicitly centers educational issues taps into the core of social inequalities and the imperative of social transformation led by youth.

#FeesMustFall

Over the past 2 years, universities in South Africa have been overwhelmed by student unrest. In March 2015, Chumani Maxwele, a student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), hurled human excrement at a statue of Cecil Rhodes, the British colonizer who donated dispossessed land to the university. The act, which catalyzed the "Rhodes Must Fall" (RMF) movement, called attention to rampant campus racism and propelled a broader push to dismantle the vestiges of colonialism and white supremacy enshrined in the curricula,

physical space, and institutional culture of South African campuses.[12] Although the statue was eventually removed from UCT following weeks of protests and the occupation of an administrative building, the movement to decolonize the university in South Africa continued, thereafter taking on a more explicitly economic character. The following October, when the South African Minister of Education announced plans to increase tuition fees by up to 6%, thousands of students across the country protested under the organizing rubric of FMF. Although students eventually secured the cancellation of the proposed increase for 2016 tuitions, the movement was reignited in September 2016 after the Minister of Education announced new tuition increases for 2017, to be established by individual institutions and capped at 8%. This time around, national protests expanded the demands to include free education for all. This latest, ongoing wave of uprisings has seen university officials become more uncompromising and students more militant. This impasse has transformed some campuses into "burned-out war zones" (Falkof, 2016), as police and privately contracted security agents inflict relentless violence against students using rubber bullets, stun grenades, and water cannons. Such forms of brutality have been captured in particularly horrifying images of injured student demonstrators, who at most brandish rocks, against police armed with military grade weaponry. These images eerily call to mind the chilling optics of the Ferguson uprisings of 2014. Such forms of disruption have overtaken campus life, as rallies, occupations, vandalism, and arson have forced the closure of nearly every major university in South Africa (Hauser, 2016). In the process, FMF has transformed "a relatively niche cause—halting a rise in tuition—into a national moral imperative," a source of political legitimacy that is, nevertheless, dwindling as protests turn more violent (Brown, 2015).

The RMF and FMF movements should be understood as symptomatic of post-apartheid realities and the deeply held rage of the "born free generation" of Black South Africans, the first to come of age after the demise of White minority rule, concerning the persistence of structuralized racial and economic inequalities (Mattes, 2012; Newman & De Lannoy, 2014). Although Black South Africans make up 80% of the national population, they are still economically worse off than Whites. According to recent data, more than half of South Africa's population lives below the poverty line as defined by the government (Stats, 2015), and the average income of a White person is roughly 6 times that of a Black person (Laing, 2012). In the major nodes of student unrest at UCT and University of Witwatersrand, as in other formerly White-only universities, the student population is significantly or majority non-White while the demographics of administrators and faculty, the curriculum, and campus culture continue to center Whiteness and what students

describe as colonial epistemologies (Walker, 2005). Although the state has officially pressured universities to recruit more Black students as redress for apartheid legacies of this kind in higher education, government funding has not accompanied this charge, leaving many institutions with financial deficits, which are shifted back onto students in the form of steadily increasing fees. As a result, of the roughly 40,000 students who begin a degree at a university or technical college annually, 85% will not graduate[13] because they are unable to pay and/or due to psychosocial stressors related to racial climate and socioeconomic status, which impede their academic performance (Letseka & Maile, 2008).

Participants in FMF recognize in this historical moment important resonances with another critical episode of student revolt in South African history. Displaying placards, inscribed with messages such as "1976 redux" and "1976-2015: Why is it always the students?" students invoke the Soweto uprisings of June 1976, in which apartheid police murdered close to 200 unarmed protesters (Brown, 2015). Led by primary and high school students, the killings incited popular protests throughout South Africa and heralded the beginning of the end of White minority rule. Contemporary students understand the current FMF movement as carrying similar significance. As Nompumelelo Gumbi, a protester at University of Witwatersrand, noted, "Every generation has a role to play to fight for justice, and this is ours" (quoted in Brown, 2015).

Although the range of political actions that make up FMF have taken on different ideological and organizational distinctions within and across campuses, movement building across these various terrains shares important commonalities. Participation in social media has been central to the sustainment of local iterations of FMF. In contrast with contemporary protests in many African nations in which men primarily compose the leadership and ranks (Goetz & Hassim, 2003; Ukeje, 2004), women, queer, and non-binary students have been at the forefront of campus struggles, as have fundamental critiques concerning the persistence of misogyny and queer antagonism within movement circles (Pather, 2016). Students on some campuses have also joined in solidarity with other groups affected by the neoliberalization of higher education, such as low-wage campus workers, who are subjected to outsourcing practices that further depress wages (Petersen, 2016).

Although these practices signal some of the promising developments within the FMF movement to date, conflict and incongruities in goals and tactics have threatened its long-term viability. The "leaderless" nature of FMF lends credence to the critique that the movement lacks direction and has provided undo space for opportunists to manipulate the celebrity associated with the movement to launch political careers (Samanga, 2016)—judgment

that has also been meted against the M4BL. Perhaps the most polarizing issue relates to the use of seemingly indiscriminate violence within protests, which now dominates discourses surrounding FMF. Over the course of the movement, violence at South Africa's universities has escalated from vandalism of statues and artwork, to confrontations with police and security agents and the burning of campus buildings, which have together caused damages estimated at close to US$75 million ("Cost of #FeesMustFall," 2016). These actions have been wholly condemned by South African President Jacob Zuma, even as government and university authorities, for their part, adopted a "zero tolerance" policy toward student protesters, authorizing the excessive use of state force to quell uprisings (Stone, Mashego, & Cele, 2016). Public opinion diverges widely on the place and effectiveness of violence as a strategy within the student movement, despite the obvious power asymmetry between the use of the force by the state and student actors. Its use by students, nevertheless, throws into question the extent to which FMF will retain its ability to mobilize students and broader society on a mass basis in the interest of social transformation.

The Borders of Solidarity

A generation or more removed from the struggles that achieved political independence in African nations and the attainment of certain legal rights for Black people in the United States, Black youth across continental boundaries are calling into question deeply held ideas about intergenerational progress. Organizers in the M4BL have exposed the fiction of Obama Era post-racialism. South African FMF activists have similarly laid bare the enduring legacies of colonialism after the transition to Black majority rule. For their part, participants in Occupy Nigeria targeted the entrenched political structures that sustain economic injustice. Across these various sites of resistance, we can discern a convergence in political strategies, interests, and claims. We see, for instance, the shared use of new media to amplify discourse around movement work, and the use of protest and other forms of direct action to confront and disrupt state power. Given the predominance of young people in organizing roles and as bodies in the street, these movements appear to be charting a divergent course from the old guard political establishment as they demand a fundamental rearrangement of power relations. More fundamentally, they represent a marked shift, generational as well as ideological, (back) to transnational forms of solidarity and the possibility of broad movement building throughout the Black Diaspora.

For now, the M4BL holds the most traction and promise as an umbrella for these forms of solidarity, some of which are already beginning to materialize.

The nomenclature "Occupy Nigeria" signals alignment, even if strategic, on the part of Nigerian activists with transnational political struggles. More germane to the M4BL, South African students occupied Parliament with their hands up in the "Don't Shoot" position during the October 2015 UCT FMF protest, emulating the aesthetics of early #BlackLivesMatter demonstrations. Then again, after the murders of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling, two unarmed Black men killed by U.S. police during traffic stops, activists in South Africa and Kenya staged solidarity protests. M4BL activists in the United States, for our part, have not responded in kind in any coordinated fashion to social justice issues in Africa or other global contexts of Black struggle since the network formed. Is it the case that non-U.S. Black lives do not matter to Black Lives Matter, the organization and broader movement? Of course they do, in theory at least. The Black Lives Matter organization has made explicit claims to the "Black diaspora radical tradition" and includes, in the organization's guiding principles, a tenet related to globalism, which indicates, "We see ourselves as part of the global Black family and we are aware of the different ways we are impacted or privileged as Black folk who exist in different parts of the world." How, then, can we make sense of the silence U.S. organizers and scholars aligned with the M4BL afford political struggles outside of the United States given the movement's ceaseless assertion of the consequence of *all* Black lives?

I understand the lack of substantive engagement with contemporary developments in Africa as a specific reflection of the continent's disarticulation from the popular imagination of current Black liberation struggles. This disarticulation is rooted, in part, in the decoupling of Black liberation from the intellectual and political traditions of Black internationalism, which explicitly center Africa in the cartographies and practices of solidarity. The M4BL's stated commitment to the kinds of diasporic Black kinship that emerge from these traditions requires that we understand struggles for social justice in Africa and the broader diaspora as central to its concerns. Race, as Jemima Pierre (2013) argues, is a "multifaceted global process" and "any and all local configurations of race and racialization are structured in and through global hierarchical relationships" (p. 4). From this perspective, manifestations of racialized oppression are multiple and varied, which means that even seemingly "age" and "class-based" struggles such as those analyzed in this article are articulations of global anti-Blackness, rooted as they are in European empire and racial capitalism. If the M4BL is to dismantle (global) White supremacy and to meaningfully interrogate axes of power and privilege within the "global Black family," we cannot afford to be insular or selectively transnational, especially given our implication in imperial power relations, which continue to imperil the African region, in particular.[14] Bearing in mind

the contextual specifities of global Black struggles, an immediately action-able and responsible form of solidarity for U.S.-based activists and scholars would be to actively investigate and amplify social justice issues in Africa and sites of the Black Diaspora outside of the United States, given our posi-tion of privilege within global media infrastructures. More fundamentally, if the M4BL is to develop beyond its signification of American particularism and to live up to the claim that "the #BlackLivesMatter movement [and] struggle is global. Until we are all free," we must continuously stretch the borders of our solidarity, not just in word but also in deed.[15]

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

1. Following the conventions of Black Lives Matter (BLM) organizers, this article makes use of "Movement For Black Lives" to distinguish between BLM, the organization, and the social movement that includes a wide range of political actors, organizations, and forms of action not limited to protest.
2. That student protests are now "suddenly ubiquitous" in the United States, after many years of decline, is due largely to the impact of national #BlackLivesMatter mobilizations since the August 2014 killing of Michael Brown (Johnston, 2015). Absent reliable national data, Angus Johnston maintains a map of student protest in the United States since the Ferguson uprisings. The map can be accessed at https://studentactivism.net/2014/12/02/a-map-of-american-student-activism-2014-15/
3. I distinguish here between the peripheralization of popular struggle South of the Sahara and the concentrated attention afforded the 2011 Arab Awakening in North African nations, which coincided with U.S. military priorities and vested interests in "democratization" in the region (Carothers, 2012).
4. This number continues to grow. Zachariah Mampilly maintains a database of popular protests in Africa, one of few existing resources with continent-level data, accessible at http://pages.vassar.edu/mampilly/publications/
5. "Sit-tight Syndrome" refers to the reluctance of sitting leaders to hand over power, often through the abuse of the political process to perpetuate the consti-tutional tenure period. Elderly sit-tight leaders are especially pervasive in Africa: Of the world's 30 longest serving leaders, roughly half of them are African heads-of-state.

6. Statistical data in this section are derived from the Global Education Monitoring Report, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/statistics

7. For instance, secondary school enrollment stands at 97% in South Africa and 11% in Nigeria. In Nigeria, where the average child spends approximately 7 years in school on average, wealthy urban children average 10 years of schooling while poor rural girls in the Northern region average less than 6 months. These data are based on the UNESCO Fact Sheet for Sub-Saharan Africa at http://www.efareport.unesco.org

8. The literature on student activism in Africa overwhelmingly favors analysis at the postsecondary level. Although this is often justified on an empirical basis, owing to the fact that student protests on university campuses are more often reported in local media and larger scale (Zeilig, 2007), it is also likely the case that the relative independence of university students from guardians and other authority figures contributes to the enhanced visibility of their political actions vis-à-vis those of legal minors in primary and secondary schools.

9. In addition to these tactics, protesters barricaded petrol stations, disrupting the sale of unsubsidized fuel, established encampments in Kano and Abuja similar to those in Zuccotti Park and Tahrir Square, and physically attacked government officials.

10. The official government line was that the fuel subsidy represented a top-heavy, economically inefficient state, whose subsidization of petroleum most benefited opportunists siphoning money in the corrupt petroleum sector (Majekodunmi, 2013). Others saw the subsidy removal as a re-elaboration of neoliberal economic reforms reminiscent of the "Structural Adjustment" policies of the 1980s, which shifted the burden of state reform onto the most economically vulnerable (Kuti, 2012; Odeniyi, 2012).

11. Despite being Africa's largest producer of oil, Nigeria relies on imported refined oil for almost all of its own fuel needs, a shameful state of affairs that is due largely to the greed of corrupt (military) regimes, multinational corporations, and internal collaborators, including state actors, who earn fortunes profiting from importation while domestic refineries have fallen into disuse (Okonta & Douglas, 2003; Watts, 2004).

12. Students at Stellenbosch University recounted similar experiences of racial discrimination and produced a film documenting everyday experiences of racism for Black students. Stream *Luister (Listen)* at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sF3rTBQTQk4

13. These data are derived from the 2015 report released by South Africa's Department of Higher Education and Training, "Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2013," available at http://www.dhet.gov.za/

14. These intractable imperial relations assume many forms. Among the most troubling and in which we are most implicated are the plunder of Congolese natural resources for cobalt, a mineral used in rechargeable lithium-ion batteries that

power smartphones and laptops; the droning of East Africa by the Obama admin-
istration; and the unknown number of U.S. military bases and outposts, likely
upwards of 100, established under the auspices of Africa Command (AFRICOM)
since 2006.

15. In a statement released on their Twitter account in July 2016, BLM used
this phrase in solidarity with protests against police killings of Black people
in the United Kingdom. Tweet link is https://twitter.com/Blklivesmatter/
status/754120131387633666

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