

# Reflect

## Albert Luthuli

CENTRE FOR RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP



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The Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership aims to develop a new generation of responsible leaders, shaping local and international business practices and policies in support of social and environmental justice.



## The mother of all arguments

Editorial Opinion by Prof. Derick de Jongh

Once again we have reached a point where the Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership is proud to present an edition of Reflect, our electronic newsletter. As you might have gathered by now, this is our attempt to share some thoughts with our readers in the hope that this will stimulate debates, get you thinking and most importantly, cause a bit of a stir.

Our choice of topics usually zooms into the dark corners of leadership, often unexplored or way too controversial, and not for the faint-hearted or sensitive reader. This edition however doesn't attempt to blow you away with yet another crazy and unconventional idea around leadership. On the contrary it is one of those topics that can never be discussed or debated enough; at least that is how I feel about it.

So, no surprise that we decided to dedicate this edition to women. Not that women in leadership is one of the dark corners of leadership, but in my mind it is definitely a topic that justifies one massive spotlight on it. I have to however start by emphasising my own disclaimer in this regard: I am a man and will never be able to do full justice to the role of women in society through my lens. I can only attempt to add a voice of appreciation, of admiration and of justice for all women. In our contemplation to decide on the theme of this *Reflect*, the one question we asked ourselves is whether women make better leaders than men. You can only imagine how such a question can place the proverbial cat among the pigeons or perhaps more appropriately, the women among the men. It usually leads to the "mother of all arguments", if you will excuse the pun. Suffice to say, a rich contestation of arguments, opinions and a body of knowledge that provides reliable evidence about women in leadership is key.

I am married and have two daughters. That makes me a wealthy man (although my bank account doesn't always reflect that). Wealthy in the sense of being surrounded by three strong women. They

don't spare me and they make it their business to keep me on the straight and narrow. They are opinionated, stand their ground and have their eyes clearly set on their role in society. They have given me lots of reason to be more than proud. Most important is that I am able to learn from them. If I can be more specific, they teach me how to show compassion, what it means to really care and nurture something I deeply value.

I appreciate their sense of responsibility and bondage towards developing and preparing the next generations. They are, by the way, the primary providers of all our basic needs in life. So, to put these qualities in (academic) perspective, let me share with you a definition of Responsible Leadership that we are supporting at the ALCRL. *"A values-based relationship between leaders and stakeholders connected through a shared sense of meaning and bound by a commitment to sustainable value creation and social change"* (adapted from Maak and Pless, 2009). The women in my life (including my own mother from a very early age) were able to show me the importance of values. They have encouraged me to seek meaning in life and to stay committed to my personal cause.

More recently I was struck by how strong the women in my life feel about changing society for the better. There is no triviality in this. I am nothing less than blessed to experience the power of women in my own life. So if I have to argue the question of whether females make better leaders than males, you can call me biased or simply trust that the women in my life give me enough reason to support that argument. The “mother of all arguments”

actually has little to argue about. The world today asks for responsibility in our actions from all of us – male and female.

The world asks for leaders who look beyond short-term gratification. Leaders who take care of the world we live in, and who will nurture, educate and develop our next generation of leaders. The world asks for more women in leadership roles and I hope we will ensure that this

happens. For once, just consider the legacies of your mother in your own life and let us talk again about whether women make better leaders than men. I am open to debate this.

Enjoy the read and immerse yourself in the stories about women leaders in this edition.

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# The Victimhood of Male

Editorial Opinion by Khaya Ndzingani

Privilege is when you contribute to the oppression of others and then claim that you are the one being discriminated against. The tragic deaths and details about femicide victims in South Africa in 2017 have sent shockwaves throughout the country, resulting in men and women taking to the streets and social media platforms to express their disdain or horror on the issue.



The recent outrage against gender violence and femicide has resulted in a non-apologetic discourse in public spaces on the role of men in oppressing women in society.

Many young women are increasingly becoming emboldened and radicalised in the fight against the subjection of women by men, emphatically painting the “harsh” reality but highly disputed narrative that #MenAreTrash. Similar to disruptive social movements that have recently popped up in the country, such as #FeesMustFall, this new voice is loud and tinged with a highly charged radical feminist narrative that has caused great discomfort for many, and has become an area of contention for both men and women who occupy spaces of privilege. This “attack on men” has left many men in society feeling unfairly villainised, some unashamedly taking on the mantle of victimhood and proclaiming this to be the new gender discrimination, thus equating it to reverse gender discrimination.

Whether one emphatically agrees or vehemently disagrees with the catch

phrase of #MenAreTrash, the conversation has uncovered the largely forgotten and subverted conversation around male patriarchy and the unearned privilege that comes with it. Unlike the conversation on violence against women, the discussion of patriarchy has included all men – with little exception – as recipients of unearned privilege, stumbling blocks for female liberation and perpetrators of the subversion of female-centred thought.

By “virtue” of me being a heterosexual man, I am privy to and occupy spaces where a woman has no presence, no voice and no ears. I’ve recently been confronted by young men, who like myself are educated, have previously experienced some form of racial or class discrimination, and are advocates of a society in which all people are free and equal. It is for these reasons I naively expect that these spaces would overwhelmingly and unreservedly support and advocate for female equality, but this is not always the case. Instead, shockingly, I’ve been met by dissenting male voices who reject the notion that we as males occupy a privileged position due to our manhood, with some of us cherry

picking “biased” laws and social norms that favour women as an illustration of the new status quo the world is moving towards.

Increasingly, the space of marginality, privilege and discrimination is being contested by female activism and is rapidly moving beyond the dominant narrative of race (around which this conversation was previously anchored). I too, as a man who occupies a privileged position, have been confronted – along with my brethren – with the question of whether men are justified in feeling like victims as feminists paint all men with broad strokes?

Do men have a legitimate leg to stand on in arguing that society, including women, socialise and expect men to act like “men”? Some even go to the extent of referencing that women too are guilty of reinforcing patriarchy because they expect men to embody the role of provider, protector and leader of the household. Thus, does it hold true that men are also victims of patriarchy, and that they constantly encounter contradicting and polarising ideas on how a real man is supposed to act?

“Whether one emphatically agrees or vehemently disagrees with the catch phrase of #MenAreTrash, the conversation has uncovered the largely forgotten and subverted conversation around male patriarchy and the unearned privilege that come with comes with it.”

It would not be far from the truth to state that men are the product of a societal construct that has been imprinted onto our social DNA. However, does this entitle me as a man to a “free pass” to justify my newfound “victimhood” and pardon my role of reinforcing the notion that this a man’s world? The issue of patriarchy is complex, layered and heavily influenced by cultural and religious beliefs, many of which are considered non-negotiable rights and sacred cows. These beliefs are seldom challenged as they are deemed

to be enshrined in one’s constitutional right to freely associate and believe in whatever one chooses, even if these beliefs clearly work in favour of men.

In reflecting on the role I need to occupy in the fight against male domination and privilege, I, too, need to constantly remind myself that I am no saint because I hold strong ideas on female equality. I need to acknowledge and reflect on my own shortcomings and biases that sometimes show themselves in private spaces

I share with other males. Rather than taking the forefront and accusing other men of being trash, deep self-reflection and introspection are required before I take the easy route of highlighting the subtle but noticeable superiority complex in male thought that is inherent in all of us. It is never easy admitting to one’s privilege, because it forces us to acknowledge we are part of the problem. On the other hand, claiming victimhood is a convenient game of evading one’s own contribution towards the problem.

# Reflections

#UPRapeCrisis Protest - Female students protesting rape culture at the University of Pretoria.

Editor’s personal reflection on the image.

Reflections help us to develop our understanding more deeply and make our intuitive knowledge shareable with others.



Fezekile Msimang



# The struggle for equality in academia: A women's view



Opinion piece by Dikeledi Mokoena

We live in a world characterised by increasing numbers of protests. In fact, South Africa is now deemed the protest capital of the world. Although this is good in the sense that it reflects the vibrancy of the civic space, the underside is that it exposes the pitfalls of coloniality which simply refers to the continuity of modern/colonial structures that are by design exclusionary, exploitative and hierarchical.

The hierarchies of a modern/colonial world constitute the intersection of capitalist structuring, patriarchy, sexism, racism, and epistemic injustice, among other facets of oppression.

The university space is an epitome of the modern/colonial world. Apart from the obvious bias towards Eurocentric knowledge and its patriarchal nature, corporatisation thrives under the neoliberal capitalist ethos of all-things-being-subject-to-material-transactions; thus basic human rights have become commercialised. The corporatised nature exploits the precarious conditions of its workers facilitated by labour market flexibility.

Capitalist production coexists with other modes of production such as slavery. The academy has grown to rely on academics allowing work to infringe on their "private time". The immense workload spills outside the paid productive hours at the workplace, thus the distinction between the productive space and the social reproductive arena is blurred.

Moreover, in line with traditional gendered roles within the household, female academics are relatively burdened with teaching larger numbers of students compared to their male counterparts who are largely engaged in more research work, hence their ease of mobility. We ought not to forget the advantage of having wives or partners who handle the care labour, thus giving males more time to write, including freedom from worry over the laundry, cooking, cleaning when it is the season to grade assignments. Many have come to realise that the

academy is hostile to emerging scholars who are black, female and single. In order to survive, you need to have a partner who is a beneficiary of patriarchy. The beneficiaries of patriarchy earn more than the female population in the labour market, hence personal relationships and new liberalised love affairs and living arrangements benefit the sustenance of the neoliberal corporatised university.

Class privilege helps in terms of hiring domestic workers to take care of household duties. Unfortunately the privilege doesn't always translate to just remuneration for the domestic workers. The privilege is also not extended to some members of the academy, for instance assistant lecturers from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, including those currently disadvantaged by black tax (which simply entails the socio-economic subsidisation of the victims of systematic racism).

Moreover, the contractual nature of academic labour often leads to indirect silencing of those whose labour is exploited. It is commonly argued that renewal of work contracts is not only merit based, it also depends on workers being mute to injustice. Those who challenge oppressive systems even in their minuscule manifestation are deemed trouble. The academia is also a space that induces schizophrenia, because it is within the academia that scholars theorise and debate injustices, yet the same injustices are experienced within the university space. The perplexing part comes from the expectation by the managers of the

university that the afflicted should normalise the unjust conditions and be silent about them. Sometimes fellow patriarchal scholars perpetuate these injustices.

Just like repressive states that use violence against those who resist exclusion and demand justice, the modern/colonial university resorts to violence, be it direct violence (for instance the manhandling of students by security personnel, police shooting students with rubber bullets) or indirect violence (for instance the exclusion of activist students, coercing students to sign anti-civic work letters, limiting freedom of association, denial of debates on counter-hegemonic views and hostility towards free thinking by academics). These forms of violence cannot cultivate a healthy ecosystem in which the university can be a terrain for breeding new ideas on improving the world, a world devoid of systematic violence and a world devoid of problematic masculinities that are violent.

Rape culture and the despicable behaviour exhibited by some male students within the university space reflect the misogyny embedded in the rest of society and the impunity of patriarchy. Patriarchy, which is an inherent aspect of modernity/coloniality, needs to be eradicated and one way is to render it punishable, instead of punishing those who actively protest against it through a plethora of means.

It is unfortunate that we live in a world where aggression and disruptive behaviour become a resort for the marginalised. Just like repressive regimes

with aloof leaders, the University needs a system that can be facilitated through the decolonial turn. The university could also learn from indigenous forms of leadership, especially by drawing from the principles of healing in African spirituality (into which I can unfortunately not delve here because I have already exceeded my word limit). Just to conclude, we need

an overhaul of the modern/colonial university, and this will be possible through comprehensive transformation that is not quantitatively driven.

Dikeledi is a mother, a perpetual student and black radical feminist. She teaches African feminism and gender studies at the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership

Institute. She is a part-time lecturer at the University of Pretoria and facilitates community dialogues under the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance. She loves laughing and occasionally believes she is funny.

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# Integrating Responsible Leadership and Innovation in Business Management

Interview by Khaya Ndzingani



Prof. Alex Antonites

In the economic and social environment we live in today, it is increasingly becoming essential for responsible leaders to make business decisions that, next to the interests of the shareholders, take into account all the other stakeholders, such as workers, clients, suppliers, the environment, the community and future generations. I had the opportunity to sit down with Prof. Alex Antonites, who is the newly appointed Head of the Department of Business Management at the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences to discuss his vision for his new role and any plans he has for the Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership. He also shared his sentiment for the importance of responsible leadership in moulding today's students to become change agents in creating a lasting social impact in society.

## **Please tell us more about your academic background and experience.**

I consider myself to be an entrepreneur in the Department of Business Management where I wear a number of hats. I initially studied a BCom, and upon its completion furthered my studies in entrepreneurship, where I was particularly interested in how entrepreneurship affects the world. I later pursued my PhD in Creativity and Innovation.

## **Where does your involvement in entrepreneurship lie?**

I am currently focusing on youth entrepreneurship, with the aim of inducing young people to creatively create jobs as opposed to becoming job seekers. In the department, I work in the service of my staff to create a new direction and a coherent strategy for the department including the ALCRL. I also teach entrepreneurship at our business school,

the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), on the MBA programme.

I furthermore consider myself to be a social entrepreneur as I oversee and run two incubators.

Firstly, the University of Pretoria Business Incubator, which is open to UP students, and where we assist in the idea generation phase, all the way up to bringing businesses to the market.

Secondly, the Mamelodi Business Incubator, where we help any rural and informal entrepreneur to succeed in the market. I also have two companies as an entrepreneur, but only as a shareholder. I mainly focus on innovation – both in the outside world and within the academic community.

**What are your plans for the Department of Business Management? Please share with us your vision and strategy.**

The Department of Business Management is currently made up of four units, namely supply chain management, entrepreneurship, responsible leadership and business management. The first phase involves creating a single coherent strategy for all of these units, with a strong emphasis on responsible leadership. I would like the youth of tomorrow who go through our system to ultimately become responsible leaders. Though responsible leadership is a broad term, we consider it very relevant to what we do here at the Department, regarding the impact we want to create.

**How does responsible leadership tie into curriculum transformation?**

As part of our process of integrating our business units, we will introduce a component of responsible leadership in all our subjects in the Department of Business Management. Over and above that, innovation is also a key driver of our department's strategy, particularly in driving curriculum transformation. In the

world we live in today, we cannot present any business course without continuously changing and adapting to the market.

The same applies to our educational offering as a department. We have to be able to adapt to the market, otherwise our students will not be work ready. In fact, we have to ensure students are work ready in a responsible manner.

**How do you plan on transforming and decolonising the curriculum?**

I've always said that our primary stakeholder is the student. When we look at the needs of our most important stakeholder, the first question we ask ourselves is, what do they do once they have completed their degree? Are students going to sit at home or are they going to make an impact? The second question we ask is, where will students work, or if they start a business, where will this be?

It is important to align our curriculum and method of training and development with these questions. We have realised that we cannot only teach American case studies, although American companies operate in South Africa. We need to balance between having a global mind set, adapting to the South African context and teaching South African cases. Also, we need to create a mind set that is African. Our continent needs our students to be responsible leaders in business who make a positive impact on society. If we look at our BCom Entrepreneur students, we encourage

them to start businesses to make money, but by including ethics, we stress that they have to do so in a responsible manner. We also acknowledge that doing business in Africa is different. Thus we have to equip students for the African environment. We ensure that our BCom Entrepreneurship students do not graduate before having been exposed to the informal sector for three months.

**Any plans for the ALCRL?**

As part of curriculum transformation, the next phase in our strategy is to incorporate community engagement into the curriculum – which will involve the ALCRL. It would be ideal to have every module within the department entail some kind of community engagement to ensure that every student is exposed to service learning and contributes to surrounding communities. Secondly, all our social entrepreneurship activities such as our business clinics and community engagement activities should be run from the centre. Thirdly, all our business management courses should include a component of responsible leadership, starting with our mainstream BCom Business Management programme from first to final year. Specifically, we want our third-year Strategy and Leadership course to start incorporating responsible leadership. The ALCRL is the only one of its kind. It is unique in terms of what it does, but we have to capacitate it to scale its impact and assist us in carrying out our strategy.

# Reflect

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