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Decolonizing the South African University

Towards Curriculum
as Self Authentication

Oscar Koopman · Karen J. Koopman



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*To our students and all those for whom the struggle
towards a decolonised university curriculum
continues. Aluta continua.*

FOREWORD

The long shadows of a culture's history are cast over the people, relived and re-enlivened in the current moments at varying levels of awareness and poignancy. This endowment from history presents the challenge of our twofold task to reflectively and deliberately mine history's many wondrous treasures but also to protect ourselves from being unwittingly swept along in the many-layered currents of its problematic aspects. To deal with the shadow of hundreds of years of alienating colonialism, today there is a passionate and hopeful call from the heart of the people of South Africa to sweep away the shackles of any remnants of foreign dominance and control. Of course, it has not been enough to replace the external and more obvious oppressive institutions the colonizers imposed there; a struggling business does not hope to renew itself and begin to thrive by replacing the sign on the shop door with the new owner's name and then proceeding to sell the same goods in the same way. To continue the job of liberation from the more insidious and invisible alienating remnants of the past, we must revisit and explore the deeper regions of our personal experience and culture—to explore, remember, reimagine, and embody a newer way of being that has greater fidelity to the wisdom of deep history, with the cultural traditions found there, and with the ways of being human that are in line with and integral to the lives of people today, in this place, at this time. This reimagining needs to be carried out in all regions of the personal psyche and the larger social milieu. The role formal education system plays in this process is of central importance, since it has as its most sacred charge the guiding of the youth into full maturity in the healthiest ways possible—to provide an ecology that helps them thrive and be fully alive.

The resources needed for this enterprise are neither high tech nor expensive. They are to be found here and now in the moments of genuine experience of reciprocal open relating between student and teacher, between student and others, and between student and the rest of nature.

The authors of this text carefully lay out the context, the rationale and a plan of action for just such a journey toward a decolonized paradigm for the education system in South Africa. However, an additional prospect of a happy marriage with another very important project is also offered here: their decolonizing plan is also entirely in line with creating the much needed conditions for prioritizing and maximizing the healthy psychological development of the citizenry. It is remarkable that this writer—an American clinical psychologist at a university in the United States—should pen the introduction for a book on the decolonization of the education system in South Africa. However, having spent the better part of many decades immersed in deep and intimate psychotherapeutic conversation with students from every part of the world, exploring and elucidating their struggles, their dreams, their loves, and their fears, I was afforded the honour of seeing first-hand and up-close the patterns and themes of the forces that take hold there. Thanks to the privilege of that access to the students' worlds, it is readily apparent to me that the authors of this text are presenting a remedy for much of what was problematic in these students' lives. Perhaps it should have come as no surprise that there was a confluence of these important and intricately intertwined enterprises: decolonization and human maturation and well-being.

To paraphrase the great sculptor Michelangelo, “the beautiful form is already inherent in the unchiselled block of marble, all that is required is to remove the extraneous bits.” The wisdom and genius of Michelangelo lay in discerning the essential core from the superfluous material and developing the talents to separate them. At first glance, it may seem counterintuitive, but an essential part of the process of human growth and maturation toward wholeness and ever greater maturity and wisdom is likewise largely a subtractive process. As children, we develop psychologically by adopting tacit as well as explicit strategies for surviving and thriving within our own perception of the swirling exigencies of our caretakers at the time and the cultural ethos around us. These strategies help the child to navigate the wondrous but mysterious and sometimes even dangerous world into which they were born. As a simple example, consider that a child may come to develop the strategy that if (and only if) they are dutifully quiet and well behaved in class, doing exactly what they are told,

then the love and admiration of the caretakers will likely be secured. This kind of psychological security is usually supremely important to the vulnerable child. Without much or any reflective awareness or deliberation, we conjure up, take in and live these strategies as part of ourselves: they become like scaffolding added to the core of the self, and they come to make up what we experience as our identity—the thought process may be “I am a quiet, hardworking, and therefore secure, kid.” This process has its benefits: over time, the strategies become habituated, well-worn paths that can make life more manageable and somewhat more comprehensible. These strategies accumulate and become intertwined with each other and they serve as invisible psychic armour that we pre-reflectively put on and wear throughout the day. They are designed to meet our needs and to protect the vulnerable interior regions of the most genuine and alive parts of ourselves. This is a good and necessary thing. These rather ingenious intertwining survival strategies, these systems of meaning that we co-create as we manoeuvre through the days of youth, are tailored to the specifics of our lived circumstances. They are forged from earliest childhood on by a relatively immature and vulnerable being with a developing but not yet mature consciousness. We build what we need to build with the means at hand.

The cloaking of the self in youthful psychic armour and the corresponding capacity to retreat into the interior of the self are not the end of development but rather one part of a larger process. Like the miraculous unfolding of the caterpillar-to-butterfly metamorphosis, the psychological layers of protection need to be routinely noticed, reconsidered, and reworked by increasingly aware consciousness according to changes in circumstances and maturity levels. In the above example, being too good at being quiet and well behaved may keep the child feeling loved and out of trouble sometimes, but it can also inadvertently make them feel unnoticed, unattended to, and abandoned. This can become an impediment to a more authentic experience and expression of themselves. The survival strategy needs fluidity built into it and this fluidity needs to be respectfully nurtured from the outside. If instead it becomes too rigid, if the child holds to the strategy with greater and greater psychological tenacity, doubling down reflexively and repeatedly on what initially seemed to be the winning strategy, and then the strategy itself becomes the problem.

In other words, if the child becomes even more quiet and hard-working when feeling the need for love and attention, if they adopt a harsh, demanding, rigid posture toward themselves in the pursuit of being quiet

to be loved, then the child has two problems. First, there is the original problem of needing to feel loved and, second, the unintended effects of the dogged commitment to the unquestioned protective strategy of being quiet. In this case, the genuine self finds that it is at odds with another part of the self, and it starts to protect itself from itself. In time, the more authentic, genuine part of the self forms internal protective barriers against conflicting parts of itself, and it then is experienced as a step removed from the more open and direct experience of the whole self. These problems risk being carried along unquestioned and unaddressed into adulthood: “It’s just the way I am,” they start to believe. In this way, the person inadvertently develops a self under siege, the self now being subject to its own internalized colonizing forces, struggling to know and speak its truth. This situation is not uncommon: one begins to construct impermeable, armoured walls around and within the self, and the deep interior is then by design too effectively cut off from the whole of the self, from others, and from the world around them. Experience of intimate connection is thus in some measure mediated and impeded by these fragmenting protective membranes: very little gets in, very little gets out. Safe, in a way, but also to some degree depleted, empty, isolated, and alienated and alone. And the whole of the person begins to hunger for the sustaining and enlivening nourishment that can only come from more in-depth and active engagement with others and the world.

Therefore, throughout the course of development, the armour must be lovingly challenged, questioned, creatively wondered about and thereby made more permeable. This allows for the flow of psychological nourishment across the membranes and throughout all regions of the self. Eventually, hopefully, this metamorphic process makes the protective layers supple enough for liberation and transformation into more advanced and sophisticated forms of self-identity. This is the process of psychological maturation and refinement and integration of the self; such a self, if it can manage to move deeply through the experiences of life, is successfully engaged in the movement of personal growth toward what we could call wisdom. In the safe and supportive social environs promoting growth, actual growth, as opposed to mere survival—in other words, in a truly healthy ecology—the deep, genuine, alive parts of the self are routinely actively sought out, welcomed, seen and valued by others, and the enlivened self is encouraged to actively and critically participate in the meaning making of their lived world.

This is precisely what the authors of this text are proposing as the centerpiece of a decolonizing environment in the education system. The resulting healthy ecology of validated active wondering and critical thinking and contemplation is destabilizing to the increasingly problematic “extraneous bits” suffocating the genuine form of the student. In these growth-filled circumstances, the extraneous bits of the self begin to lose their apparent solidity and fall away, and the beautiful form of the more genuine deep self enjoys greater freedom to emerge and form a more mature, meaningful, integrated identity. This maturing identity is thus freed by the “Michelangelo child” from the archaic commitments and dynamics of the youthful survival-oriented, “block of marble” self: “I do not have to be ever more quiet and hard working to be loved and secure; moreover, I do need to be seen, heard, and valued”. This open, fluid identity is better able to develop in a manner commensurate with the complex exigencies of adult life: more gets in, more gets out and the self-dynamics are more efficient and harmonious. The self is experienced more often with a lived sense of “oneness”, and the protective strategies now lived more as part of the genuine deep self. Remarkably, we are all, by virtue of being human, endowed with the capacity for this growth process—our task is to provide the conditions that transform this potential into reality. The social ecology and educational system will be the incubator—we must ensure that what is being incubated is growth toward full maturity, wholeness, and wisdom.

Lacking this dynamic relational liberation and fluidity, that is, remaining too effectively sequestered within the presumably protective walls of the habitually over-bounded self, the person’s identity will be lived as too disconnected from the vital source of the self, and there will arise across this static chasm a lack of integration, harmony and fidelity to the truth of one’s being. Over time, the person’s experience will reflect an oversized proportion of unchallenged meanings and forces deposited or imposed from the outside; this is more akin to being “overstuffed” than it is to being informed, integrated and enlightened. The relatively alienated person with this infused identity will become unduly and dangerously subject to the forces that entered and continue to enter the self-system neither questioned nor critically examined nor genuinely adopted by the deepest parts of the self. From the start, the vital agency of the self can thus become compromised before it even becomes self-reflective or aware, and the result is a sense of disconnection from self that habituates and solidifies, as the person strives to survive in the available cultural ethos. We have the

capacity to recognize and remedy these toxic processes, but they are often insidious and invisible, tricky to see with clarity, and their influence is evident mostly in their suffocating and alienating effects. It is sad when struggling water lilies in the pond lack the essential nutrients and conditions for thriving; the plants will survive, probably, but they will be vulnerable, they will produce mostly brown and diseased leaves, and there will be few flowers. The full magnificence of the living beings will not be realized.

When the deepest, most existentially intimate part of a person is not invited to be meaningfully active in the ongoing conversation it is having with the world, a serious problem for healthy functioning and maturing thus arises. The protection system then becomes too much of a filtering and distorting glass that can tragically or dangerously misshape and misalign what is experienced, dislodging the self's genuine inclinations and feelings from the rest of the self, constricting, strangling and clogging the pathways of genuine spirit and compassion. An ongoing muting of the senses further alienates the person from a full experience of their vital, embodied self. Sensory experience itself becomes habitually filtered and shallow, and with little awareness of this fact, the person skims across experience superficially like a surfer moving across the surface of the water, moving too fast to experience the full richness and meaning of the depths below. What would otherwise be the site of saturated intimate contact and exchange, a beautiful moment of vital engagement with the world, instead the disconnected body here becomes lived—not as an organic part of the living self, but as an impersonal object, yet another object out there in the world to be used, dominated and controlled, an inanimate vessel used primarily to move the cerebral cortex around as it does its business with the world.

Furthermore, because of the demands of the social game in which the person is required to participate and compete, we can expect that there will routinely be serious gaps between what the person genuinely and desperately needs psychologically and what the person actually gets. This happens to be true, more or less, even if the available culture feels largely like one's own, grounded in one's own deep history; it is an inevitable part of the story of development because of the serendipity of life. It is also a gap that we, especially as elders and parents and educators, valiantly strive to minimize. However, the gap is especially likely and doubly alienating and perilous when that problematic cultural ethos has itself been largely imported from a different place, a place not rooted in or richly connected to the lived experience of the local persons today and their history and

their ancestry. This, of course, is the case for the people of a culture recovering from colonization: even after the colonizers finally leave, there is an additional decolonization of the interior of the infiltrated self and imported social institutions to which the people must attend. In this circumstance, deliberate and dogged vigilance must be employed to prevent, at all costs, the educational system from unintentionally becoming an indoctrination system operating in the service of alienating meanings. The post-colonised culture can inadvertently support the well-worn paths of the colonizers. Caught up in the busy flow of life, the students themselves may find little inclination to veer outside the lines to explore other ways of knowing or being. They may even feel quite dissuaded from challenging the status quo. The authors wisely warn that the influence and saturation of modern technology in South Africa, along with the increasingly unchecked allegiance the education system has to the world economic system and its needs may actually increase the danger of being unreflectively co-opted along colonized paths. For the decolonising culture especially, the assumption must be that the social ecology remains too saturated with habituated meaning systems that are even further removed from the truths of the members' genuine deep experience and history. These must be taken up and reworked by the citizenry, individually and with each other in community, from the ground up.

The circumstances conducive to attending to healthy psychological development and growth are marvellously variable but not always entirely negotiable. A growth-enhancing ecology must conform to the existential realities of becoming fully human, and this ecology must be carefully considered and lovingly, creatively provided. When the societal ethos veers too far from that healthy course and sets off toward its own objectives, as when the ethos favours instead the objectification and commodification of the self—when marketplace needs are pre-eminently valued and dominate the social discourse and the education system—we will predictably develop a culture producing less than healthy, fully mature and alive citizens. My own decades of clinical experience have led me to be in agreement with the authors of this text: the healthy conditions are in these cases effectively pushed aside and sacrificed in favour of an agenda with its own, different and often specious objectives. Instead of offering up the possibility of genuinely meaningful and enriching experiences in a life committed to enlivened wholeness and maturity, as we would hope, an essentially market-dominated education system entices and misleads the citizenry down the path of a promise of “winning” the economic success game at

the expense of psychological growth and well-being. Do we truly want students to dedicate themselves to the dream of landing a leading role in a bad play? And at such a cost! Healthy development becomes more difficult and less likely for the citizens in an overwhelmingly market-driven world. The effects of the differing objectives and valued ways of being in such a world become internalized as part of the person's identity, an identity now with the genuine deep self inclined in some measure to move further away from a healthier social conversation.

The influence flows in the other direction too: because of this fragmentation of the self, the cultural ethos is also deprived of the valuable contributions of a truly alive and thriving self as it matures toward wisdom. The reciprocating co-creative exchange between this over-commodified self-identity and the evolving cultural ethos will reflect this impoverishing dynamic. The problem is thereby enhanced, sustained and passed along in this less-than-healthy form. Left to fend for themselves, the people must struggle against a strong current of devaluing forces which are not conducive to growth, inclining them toward a perpetual alienation of self and the myriad psychological and social maladies that accompany that kind of disconnection. This person, even if intelligent and educated and economically successful, moves through the moments of life too much like a remote-controlled car—"driven" rather than "driving", going along for the ride, riding along on a life journey not enough their own. This problem is not always obvious from the point of view of the outside observer, nor is it often reflected upon by the experiencer. However, it is often revealed in one's most open and reflective moments, such as in the still of the night or in deep explorations in the psychotherapist's office. This is a person who might describe having, in truth, at the deepest level, only a vague sense of who they are, where they are, or where they are going, but who perilously keeps moving along nonetheless. Being driven rather than driving is, sadly, all too common in today's world and it is undoubtedly the source and furtherance of much of the excessive personal, social, and political mayhem and pain we find all around us. However, as the authors of this text brilliantly argue, there is within our reach a better way to move forward, a more enlightened way that is needed now more than ever.

Luckily for all, we can reliably expect to find the remedy to this alienation in a certain quality of experience: experiencing the growth-enhancing movement into the most fertile and live depths of one's relationship with self, others and the rest of nature. This can be accomplished in many ways, but it is often a subtle movement that is at first difficult to describe. Like

helping someone to learn to ride a bicycle; at some point, the novice must simply get on and begin to feel their own way through it. It is a very interior and private movement that can only be captured by the subject. Or, at first, it can be like walking outside into the dark and allowing one's eyes to adjust to the low light; as the eyes gradually adjust, a whole visual world—a world that was always already there—begins to appear. Once one starts to notice the difference in the quality that everyday experience can take on, the capacity to both recognize and accomplish this kind of deep engagement is enhanced. The first step is to notice and appreciate the varying characteristics of relating. This is something that is available to us—in principle, at least—if we turn our attention toward it and become more expert. As a psychotherapist, I can attest that there is a huge payoff for that investment toward developing expertise in the different experiences of relating.

The great theologian and scholar Howard Thurman once famously advised his students, Martin Luther King, Jr., included among them, “Don’t ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive” (Baillie, 1997, p. xv). When teaching and learning in the classroom are experienced as mainly involving the one-way transfer of facts from teacher to student, the active, involved, ecstatic contact necessary for a student to know in a lived, embodied way and to feel they have agency and own the material—all of this is compromised. Instead of thriving in the mutually responsive, reciprocal engagement of the dance of intermingling selves of student-and-teacher in a mutually respectful relationship, the student becomes a passive and subordinated, interchangeable being effectively engaging transactionally, at arm’s length, the material being deposited. Conversely, if the educational milieu encourages open, active, critical, creative engagement by the student, where the students feel free to open up so their burgeoning wisdom and everyday experience are celebrated and made available and brought meaningfully into the relationship, then the educational moment becomes an enlivening and growth-filled event. Since, in many settings, this can represent a shift in expectations, this inviting posture must be explicitly promoted, exemplified and lived out by the instructors and the general academic culture. Then, for all involved, it becomes an experience like the inspired improvisational play of two jazz musicians creatively riffing on a theme, striking a balance between structure/discipline and freedom/play, each artist with their own contribution but each also inextricably linked to the other in an intimate musical

dance, the intertwining whole including but being far greater than the sum of their individual contributions. It is all gained or lost in the quality of this relating, in finding the balance between the disciplined, hard work of being open to learning something new and the creative freedom to contribute to the lively play of the interaction. The supremely valuable currency of thriving, of being fully alive, of intimate connection and meaning-making is found in the event of this deep reciprocal relating. This is where the real treasure of life is realized, and this is where we need to be.

It is here, in this moment of relating, that the transcendent experience of the student is accomplished and an important part of the process of psychological identification occurs (Beyer, 2014). It is the beautiful moment when the student may feel with profound clarity of awareness and self-evident surety of presence that they are most genuinely themselves and also, in the same moment, part of something larger, beyond the skin-bounded self: part of the community, part of the whole human story, the unfolding story of those of the past and those of the future, or an intimate part of the nature alive around them and even the whole of nature and the cosmos. One can see that this commitment to the invisible deep interior of the self in the openness of relating is not to be misunderstood as a kind of individualism. Quite the contrary: this is the moment when the person experiences—not just intellectually knows or understands—but actually experiences the intimate, mutually saturating and intertwining connection with others and the world. It is an experience when one is likely to say that they feel most truly themselves and most alive, connected, part of something. It is at once the most psychologically growth enhancing and the deepest, most powerful decolonizing moment.

In addition to considerations of how the education experience is undertaken, a healthy and decolonizing curriculum will require an ongoing reimagining of what is to be included. As argued above, the curricular material in the educational setting must include an interweaving of the material emanating from the student, the valuable relevant truths of their world. It would need to in some way invite and include the student's lived way of knowing and exploring, reflecting the historical and current social ways of being and knowing according to this place and these people: the art and literature, the stories and legends, the myths, the spiritual traditions, the music and dance. It would include the student's specific biographical world and local community. It would include the reawakened sensory experience that comes from intimate and open spirited connection with the nature around them. In addition, it would welcome that which is

at the moment only nascent in the student's experience but may come to be known if given the fertile ground to be realized, nurturing the student's emerging subjectivity. There is something so healing and enlivening in this moment of being heard, listened to, recognized and valued for what you have to say; it is both simple and profound, and all too rare. These depths of experience in relating are where we discover a lived sense of being at home, of belonging, of community, and of connection with others and nature: you stir the pot of soup to the very bottom because that is where the heat is. Once the deepest part of the self is included, opportunities for reflective and contemplative experience make it more likely that the tapestry of meanings being explored can be woven into all parts of the self, becoming owned and part of the whole self and fostering integrity, harmony, compassion, love and justice.

The wisdom of the elders and ancestors is realized when we inhabit the very ground of our being and incorporate it all into the vast and expanding reaches of the landscape of the whole of the psyche. This is the magnificent flowering of the water lily: the person's contribution to the ongoing co-creation of self and culture will thus include the best from the depths of one's being. Looking at it from the other side, the best of the maturing culture will be reciprocally included in the depths of one's self, enlivening and enriching them both, engendering a wise and mature citizenry and a wise and mature culture. This is both the vision and objective of the authors of this text. It is a worthy and hopeful vision whose time has come.

Pittsburgh, PA, USA
August 2022

Jeff Beyer

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PREFACE

This is a co-authored book written by Dr Oscar Koopman a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Curriculum Studies in the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University and Dr Karen J. Koopman, a Senior Lecturer in Commerce in the Department of Educational Studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. The seed for writing this book was planted almost twenty years ago, when I (the first author of this book) was reading for my Master's degree under one of the world leaders in indigenous knowledge as a field of study in science education, Prof. Meshach Ogunniyi, at the University of the Western Cape. It was in Professor Ogunniyi's lectures and Friday afternoon seminars where I was introduced to the place and significance of indigenous knowledge in science education. As someone who grew up with a Western worldview, followed a Western science curriculum at school, completed a Bachelors in Science, specialising in medical sciences, I found these ideas very strange. I vividly remember saying to one of my peers, "I'm definitely not going to include anything on indigenous knowledge or the theories on the teaching and learning of indigenous knowledge in my dissertation". However, during these seminars, where I was introduced to the scholarly contributions of decolonial science education scholars, such as Glen Aikenhead, Olugbemiro Jegede and Masakata Ogawa, who all dedicated their life's work to promoting the idea of an indigenous knowledge science curriculum, I learned about the impact of such knowledge on students' thinking. Consequently, during these seminars, the main focus of almost every student who was reading towards their masters or doctoral studies was on the promotion of an indigenous science education curriculum.

As time progressed and the more I read about how African students think about the world, how their cultures and childhood experiences shape their thinking and how they think about science through these lenses, I almost want to say I became converted. Some of my peers were interested in understanding the neurological processes involved in filtering abstract scientific ideas through an indigenous worldview. One of my peers who was reading for her doctoral degree was particularly interested in what happens in the minds of African learners when they learn abstract Western science. From her work, I realised that there was a silent invisible and unconscious war between “Western science” and “indigenous knowledge” happening inside the minds of African student, which sparked the age-old debate in the field of sociology on “whose knowledge is more important”. These Friday afternoon presentations and discussions helped me to reflect more deeply on some of my cultural practices as a child and how it shaped my thinking. This helped me to understand notions such as cognitive dissonance, cognitive perturbation and cognitive conflict much better. To understand myself better, I also developed an interest in border-crossing theory, as posited by Glen Aikenhead, collateral learning theory, posited by Olugbemiro Jegede, harmonious dualism theory, continuity hypothesis and dialogical argumentation instructional theory, posited by Meshach Ogunniyi. All these theories provided fresh insights into the psychological, physiological and neurological processes not only of how I learned things, but also of what happens in the minds of others, particularly African students.

In 2010–2013, when I moved to Stellenbosch University to read for my doctoral studies under Professor Lesley Le Grange at the Education Faculty, who also supervised Dr Karen J. Koopman, I was introduced to the field of phenomenology and its usefulness to curriculum studies as a field. At Stellenbosch University, Lesley introduced me to Max Van Manen’s book titled *Researching lived experience*. As I was reading this book, by chance I stumbled upon the complex yet very rewarding ideas of the canonical phenomenological writers, such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre and Gilles Deleuze, among others. As I was reading the works of these scholars, I developed a thirst to read more of their works. The works of these scholars helped me first to get to know myself and in the process, assisted me to understand the value of indigenous knowledge even better, as it speaks to the development of human consciousness, particularly how lived experience as a science speaks to our very existence with reference to “why we do what we

do” and “why we think and behave in a particular way”. Phenomenology helped me to breakdown all the walls I built around myself with my personal and cultural beliefs. This meant I could start to understand and explain the inherited dispositions of my mind and behaviour, culture and history. I started to understand the importance of context as the origin of the thoughts and ideas of each and every student, that are all entangled in lived experience. As I was searching for the application of phenomenology in the field of curriculum studies, I was led to the works of curriculum theorists such as William Pinar, Maxine Green and Tetsuo Aoki, among many others. After completing my doctoral studies in 2013, I had one objective in mind, that is, to bring the field of phenomenology, indigenous knowledge and science education under one umbrella. Linking these three distinctive areas of research to curriculum studies not only helped me better understand myself but also my students.

Prior to 2015, scholarly contributions and attempts to decolonise the university curriculum in South Africa had not succeeded. It was during the Fallist movement, during which all universities were shut down, that the Department of Higher Education and Training, university management teams across the country, and government officials were forced to meet with student bodies to discuss the future of the South African university curriculum. It was during this nationwide shutdown of all universities in response to violent student protest actions, that Dr Karen J. Koopman, who co-authored this book with me, constantly asked, “When are we going to start writing this book? Don’t you think the timing is now right to do so?” During the last few years, almost every morning without fail, when the two of us walked briskly along the coastal path a kilometre or more from our house in Hermanus, about 120 kilometres from Cape Town in South Africa, we would have long conversations about how to approach the writing of this book. On many days, the walk included a welcome stop at a seaside restaurant to enjoy breakfast. During those long hours of walking and chatting, we discussed every aspect of this book many times. At times, Karen Koopman would draw a mind-map of our ideas on the paper serviettes on the table, which she would neatly fold and place in her bag, saying, “Now we have it on paper, let’s start”. We have both gained beyond measure from all those conversations and exchanges in writing this book.

Cape Town, South Africa
Cape Town, South Africa

Oscar Koopman
Karen J. Koopman

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