



Communication and Marketing Department  
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso  
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa  
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town  
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

[www.uct.ac.za](http://www.uct.ac.za)

17 August 2016

## UCT doctoral research highlights the potential of black feminist intellectual activism as teaching

A thesis by University of Cape Town (UCT) graduate Mary Hames argues that it is possible to realise the potential of black feminist theories through pedagogic strategies operative beyond the academic curriculum but still within university institutional borders. Dr Hames re-reads black feminist theory to suggest that the design of programmes generated as part of students' political, social, and cultural lives on campus should draw on this theory to imagine transformative pedagogic opportunities. She reveals 'theory in action' and puts her research into conversation with various 21st century debates about "research-as-practice" and performance studies. Her exposition reveals carefully the power of these programmes to revolutionise notions of 'learner,' 'teacher' and "knowledge' itself.

The dissertation grapples with teaching and learning outside of the formal classroom. In Dr Hames' own words: "It shows how one could raise consciousness about social justice by using personal narratives and performance. It provides examples of how the voice and the body become important teaching tools in claiming space and speaking out against violence against women and homophobia amongst others. In a sense it is reviving the notion of 'education for liberation.'" In the dissertation 'agency' deliberately forms the centre of the argument.

Initially drawn to the subject by wondering if performance art could be utilised as a tool for teaching about inclusiveness and belonging in higher education and in effect redirecting the misogynistic and racist gaze, Hames began to contemplate means of education and their relation to the subjects they deliver.

"The concern in how to educate differently and reclaim the black female body in a time where black women's lives are regarded as less important." This was Dr Hames' launching point when she began to approach both her dissertation and its eventual practical application.

In considering the outcome of investigating black feminist intellectual activism and its practical potential for taught academic engagement, Dr Hames had opportunity to confront the nature of students' political, social and cultural lives on campus. From this, the

opportunity for pedagogic learning made itself clear.

From her storied observations, Dr Hames found her mission: "Making radical feminist education relevant." More so, she says, "Making black women's presence visible in a positive way. Reinforcing the agency and energy that South African young black women have," as said by Hames.

She is very clear on what it is exactly that she would like for her research to contribute to society. "The reclamation of voice and body in a society that is becoming increasingly violent and apathetic towards those that it regards as 'other.'"

Her research aims to disrupt the notion of theory informing practice, by providing evidence that practice itself can be intellectually theorised. That engagement with the intersectionality of race, class, gender, (dis)ability and sexuality need not only be located in the classroom.

Dr Hames' research leads with the belief that "you do not necessarily need a formal classroom to teach about liberation and freedom of the self."

**ENDS**

***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

**Sino Mdunjeni**

Media Liaison Assistant  
Communication and Marketing Department  
University of Cape Town  
Rondebosch  
Tel: (021) 650 4976  
Cell: (079) 490 2717  
Email: [sino.mdunjeni@uct.ac.za](mailto:sino.mdunjeni@uct.ac.za)  
Website: [www.uct.ac.za](http://www.uct.ac.za)