

## **Finding the 'Durban Moment' in Cape Town: Henry Isaacs and Leonardo Appies and the New Student Activism in the Western Cape, 1973-1976**

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University of the Western Cape rector Brian O'Connell writes, in 2010, that "By June 1976 [...] with only coloured and some Indian students and a few coloured lecturers, UWC assumed control of the struggle in the Western Cape". O'Connell is correct, of course. His "by" implies that 1976 had antecedents. These could include the UWC anti-Republic Day demonstration in 1966, the Demas 'tie affair' of 1970, and the activism of the class of 1973. This paper asks how, and why in 1973, did students of Durban and in Cape Town arrive at the rendezvous of decision about the future of South Africa? It seeks to understand the activist moments of the Western Cape. The paper therefore traces the student movement in the Western Cape from 1973 through 1976, placing in the centre of it embodiments thereof, student leaders Henry Isaacs and Leonardo Appies. It asks if and to what extent the moments of 1973 and 1976 connected the Western Cape to the national protest theatre and if this region, riding on a wave of newly released student energy, nationalised the freedom struggle in South Africa. By looking at a series of events, evolutionary or composed, by dipping into tracts students produced, and by interrogating new vocabularies, the paper explores how the students of the Western Cape retooled for the revolution. It seeks to demonstrate that the 'Cape Town moment', like the Durban one, transcended regionalism, ethnicism, and older modes of struggle.