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Ideals have been betrayed

Larger issues were at stake in the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) strike than salaries and service conditions.

It exemplified the growing concern about the impact of neo-liberalism in institutions of higher learning, increased economic referencing in education and the demand that academics do more for less. It is unacceptable that staff are told that the "good times are over" -- whatever that means -- and referred to disrespectfully as "so-called academics".

Models for assessing "academic effectiveness" are based on irrelevant criteria that in no way consider quality education and teaching, and have been introduced without consultation with staff.

And the professed emancipatory ideals of the university have been compromised. These are supposed to reflect educators' desire to contribute to the holistic development of students so that they engage as active citizens, concerned with deepening democracy in South Africa and the world.

Citizenship, human rights and democracy cannot be addressed within the restrictive language of the markets, profit and individualism.

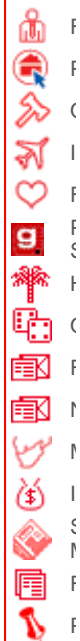
This is one of the roots of the resistance at UKZN. Managerial and market-related discourses have come to dominate every sphere of life there.

Emancipatory ideals will not be achieved within the culture of intimidation, attempts to sow division among staff, fear and open threats current at UKZN. We need to create and maintain space for open debate, and to reclaim what a university represents in terms of academic freedom, excellence in scholarship and the desire to contribute to a better world. -- *Professor Vishanthie Sewpaul, school of social work and community development, UKZN*

It is typical of Ashwin Desai that when he is given an opportunity to state his case, he makes a scurrilous attack on someone ("Put me with the coolies and the squatters", February 24).

No one is interested in whether the UKZN vice-chancellor, Malegapuru

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➤ Makgoba, earns more than he does. Or does he think Africans should earn less than Indians? And no one is interested in whether Makgoba has a credit card. Or does he think that, like Jacob Zuma, Africans can't handle their own finances?

➤ So what if Makgoba eats calamari and Desai roti? That is a personal preference -- or is he saying Makgoba, as a Mopedi, should stick to morogo?

That Makgoba had problems at Wits is not the issue. Or is the suggestion that this somehow disqualifies him from pronouncing on Desai?

Desai should address the following issues: Was he charged with misconduct at the old University of Durban-Westville? Did he cut a deal with the authorities, and if so, what did it provide for and why does he not abide by it?

Academic freedom must be defended at all costs -- but Desai crossed the borders of discipline and Makgoba has no authority to unban him. That can only be done by the university council, with which Desai entered a contract in the first place. Makgoba is the council's servant.

Let Desai approach the council, which should be big-hearted enough to forgive him. -- *Sifiso Ndlovu, former UDW student*

Pilger naive on Iran

John Pilger's naive comments about the threat Iran poses to Israel are laughable ("Iran: The next war", February 24).

I found many references on the Internet that contradict him, including the BBC website (www.bbcnews.com). Among other things, this reports: "[Iran's] sand-coloured Shahab-3s, towed on mobile launchers to rousing military music during the parade, have a range of about 1 300km -- capable of reaching Israel, Iran's sworn enemy.

"It is also believed that the missile is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. The missiles were daubed with slogans including 'We will crush America under our feet' and 'Israel must be wiped off the map'." -- *Gill Katz, Media Team Israel*

Ilan Baruch's article, "The myths of Ronnie" (February 17), says Palestinian leaders pursued relations with Nazi Germany. While Al-Hajj Amin, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, was a Palestinian nationalist who established ties with the Nazis before and during World War II, the vast majority of Palestinians disassociated themselves from the Nazi agenda.

In all anti-colonial struggles, from Ireland to India, there were elements that hoped to see a German victory, but this does not mean their struggles were Nazi or anti-Semitic.

It should also be remembered that the former South African prime minister John Vorster, a Nazi sympathiser, was received as a hero by the Israeli government during his visit to Israel in 1976.

Vorster was hailed by Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin as "a force for freedom" and by Shimon Peres as "one of the greatest leaders of our time". -- *Mohammed el Herfi, University of Pretoria*



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