

Keynote Abstracts

Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla

Narrative, Voice, and Power: Exploring Regimes of Power in a Previously Whites-Only University in South Africa**Abstract**

It seems quite appropriate that at a conference dealing with individual narratives from the apartheid “past”, we should also explore how these narratives shape identity and their impact in the lives of individuals as they try to make sense of their experiences in the present. Academic institutions that were reserved for whites under apartheid, and which currently subscribe to transformation goals – at least at a policy level – are interesting sites for investigating how the past may be evoked through narrative in the present. In this paper, I make the methodological case for narrative inquiry as a unique approach to critically examine the various ways in which power and dominance are reproduced through text and talk at a South African university. The paper is based on the analysis of textual narratives presented by a faculty staff member (the subject) to different “audiences” in an attempt to make sense of his experience of the denial of promotion to the rank of full professor. By juxtaposing the narrative inquiry of the subject’s narratives with the textual dialogue between him and the Chair of the promotions committee, I engage in an interpretation of how power dynamics play out in the context studied, and demonstrate the subtle ways in which language is used to silence, control and mystify the reasons for denial of promotion. By analysing the subject’s narratives in his search for meaning and quest for an explanation, I will show how narrative voice can become a tool for political action with a potential for enacting change.

On the Clash of Martyrological Memories

Abstract

What happens when students holding rival though indirect memories of past conflicts confront each other in the same classroom? What are the kinds of political and pedagogical approaches necessary for mediating such “clashes of martyrological memories” in the same educational space? And why is critical theory inept at offering resolutions for the kinds of conflict that emerge in societies where the children of the oppressed and those of the oppressor learn together in the aftermath of cataclysm? Using the example of post-apartheid South Africa, I draw on empirical research conducted at a former white university campus to lay the theoretical ground-work for what I call a post-conflict pedagogy.

Art and Apartheid

Abstract

Art has a central role to play within any changing society. This was noticeably evident in South Africa throughout the era of Apartheid. During this period, South African artists struggled to negotiate their creativity with the wider social and political aspects characteristic of Apartheid. This was specifically with regards to artists' creativity being interpreted as instances of political or social commentaries and the potential dangerous consequences those interpretations may involve. Questions arose as to whether art could ever be produced solely for art sake and whether artists would ever be able to express their creativity outside of the confines of the wider political milieu. In exploring these questions I will use my own trying experience as an artist working within the margins of Apartheid South Africa. In doing so, I will depict how repressive regimes directly impact the creativity of artists.

Apartheid: Building Moderate Memories from an Extreme Past – A Flawed Template

Abstract

South Africa's transition to democracy and the mechanisms used to deal with its past, including the TRC, were deeply flawed, to the extent that they focused substantially on dealing with and responding to 'White vulnerability' and hardly on the experiences and expectations of the millions of ordinary victims of apartheid. Legislation narrowly circumscribed the scope of the TRC's work, while the compromises reached saw the entrenchment of white benefit and privilege, and little, if any substantive responsiveness to ensure redress of the violation of the rights of millions of Black victims. The consequence of this was that the memory template as well as the reconciliation-reconstruction template required for the effective transformation of our society was constructed with a distinct bias in favour of Whites. This has contributed to the failure by our society to deal with racism and its ongoing effects, and there is clearly a need to reconstruct the template to properly reflect the scope and width of apartheid law, policy practice and its internalization.

Statecraft, Political Identities and Political Violence: Some Reflections on a Research Agenda

Abstract

This paper is based on the author's recent book titled *Darfur, Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics and the War on Terror*. In doing so, it will primarily reflect the research undertaken in compiling the manuscript. A central research question that arose during the compilation was what is the relationship between statecraft, scholarship and political mobilization in the making of 'Arabs' and 'Africans'? Following this, I question, who is an 'Arab' and who is an 'African'? In turn, it is necessary to investigate and explore the relationship between modern statecraft and advocacy groups, on the one hand, and the making and unmaking of identities on the other. As such, a question arises as to what the responsibility of intellectuals and academics alike is and how to turn this responsibility into action

Memory and Apartheid: Disentangling Collective and Personal Narratives of Experiences under Apartheid

Abstract

The paper's overarching concern will be to understand how people, especially black South Africans, remember apartheid. It argues that the construction of collective memories have largely, but not exclusively, been based on romanticised notions of community (for example, pre-forced removal residential areas or anti-apartheid formations). In this process individual narratives have tended to be subsumed in one or other collective narrative, resulting in only partial understandings of apartheid experiences. It will be argued that disentangling individual narratives from collective narratives could reveal much richer and more complex histories of apartheid. Finally, by drawing on recent literature on apartheid and memory, the paper will point to the complications of retrieving memories of apartheid.

I Speak as a White

Abstract

Archives house the representations of the experiences and events that a society deems crucial to understanding its own history. Apartheid as an institution has fundamentally molded South African society in racially inflected ways. The Apartheid archives must of necessity therefore also be racially inflected. Whites largely occupied the position of perpetrators, bystanders, and/or beneficiaries in the apartheid state and stories from these positions need to be told. These stories need to be told not only as a matter of record, and to address questions of collective guilt and responsibility but in an attempt to understand the mechanisms by which ordinary whites came not only to internalize racism but to express it. Given that racism remains ubiquitous this endeavour has relevance not only for the past but for the present. This endeavour is painful and difficult as it requires taking on board unattractive and destructive aspects of the self. It requires going against an intuitive need to protect the integrity of the self and self esteem by disowning negatively judged aspects of the self through the deployment of various psychological defences. This paper explores the difficulties involved in owning these aspects of the self and how this complicates the attempts of whites to come to terms with their pasts.

Thinking of *Makwerekwere*: Racism in South Africa

Abstract

Each time the subject of racism is mentioned in South Africa, it is discussed in relation to black citizens of South Africa. This makes sense because the ordinary people of South Africa directly bore the brunt of racism from the policies of separate development that apartheid espoused. However, in the studies of racism in South Africa what is often given lip service and sometimes completely left out is the racism that the black foreigners from African countries who migrated and continue to move into South Africa experienced and continue to experience. The aim of this paper is to explore the nature of racial discrimination that blacks from outside South Africa experienced, especially when they came to work in the South African mines. Most of the black foreigners, pejoratively described as *Makwerekwere* have made South Africa their home and yet they continue to experience racism. This racism is articulated in very complex ways. For example, foreigners are paid less on the farms where they work. The most visible expression of racism that manifested itself as xenophobia happened in 2008 between April, and May. It is estimated that some 65 black foreigners lost their lives. This form of racism done on blacks by black South Africans can be explained materially in terms of 'racialised' competition for jobs that the South African capitalist economy encourages. Further, the racism that manifested itself in the form of xenophobia also affected some South African blacks. More significantly this paper argues that xenophobia as an expression of embedded South African racism in the past and the present does not affect white people and it is this aspect which makes the need to archive xenophobia as racism very pertinent.

Research Team Abstracts

Bowman, Brett

'Raced' Preciousness and Apartheid Childhood

Abstract

As relays to the future, children formed key targets for surveillance and intervention within the broader apartheid biopolitics of South Africa. This identification of the 'health' of the child as an index to the future state of the nation prioritised apartheid's children as key sites of political struggle. The overtly racist logic that separated South Africa's 'white citizens' from its 'black masses' meant that black children could not lay claim to the value, vulnerability and preciousness implied by particular versions of modern childhood and their disciplinary strangleholds. This paper presents a genealogical analysis of the apartheid child as a backdrop against which to understand narrative snapshots of childhood in the apartheid archive. In so doing, it argues that the institutional racialisation of children and childhood in South Africa was more than a critical means to securing the country's vision of white hegemony. Rather, 'raced' preciousness was both an instrument and effect of the type of racism that would make and then break apartheid South Africa.

Narratives of Complicity

Abstract

Black women, a numerical majority group in South Africa were minoritised and systematically flung to the bottom rung of the hierarchical ladder of citizenship created through the social experiment of apartheid. This legacy lives on and complicates post-apartheid attempts to give black women access to equal opportunities. Through analyzing a corpus of narratives reflecting on the protagonists' lives during apartheid and those that deal with the subject of black woman in particular, this paper seeks to explore the narrator's 'complicity' with the apartheid machine. It goes further to look at how the racist system entangled the notions of perpetrator and victimhood through what Fanon (2008) termed the racial distribution of guilt. This second aim is realized through looking at the narratives of black women. The paper utilizes Fanon's problematising of the individual problem with the social conditions wrought by an oppressive system. As the most 'wretched of the earth' the paper focuses on black women as well as their trajectories within a democratic social order. The paper also focuses on the workplace in relation to the interconnecting relationship between economic marginalization and psychological oppression.

The Unspeakable: Then and Now

Abstract

This paper examines the ways in which a group of research respondents have elected to narrate their experiences of racism during the apartheid period. The paper departs from the assumption that the register and manner in which these experiences are narrated are strongly mediated by a complex intersecting set of subjective and social factors. Furthermore, the paper argues that despite the significance of acknowledging past experiences and injustices in the establishment of social justice and solidarity in the present, in a context in which recalling and talking about the past are becoming increasingly fraught and indeed proscribed (in part due to the need for silence in the past as well as various current individual, social and political exigencies), eliding aspects of past experiences of racism is increasingly becoming a response of choice for South Africans. This, it is argued, is perhaps largely a function of attempts to cope or survive in the present. Employing a critical discourse analytical framework, the paper examines the registers and mechanisms through which respondents endeavour to articulate the past (including that which had been impossible to be spoken of in the past), as well as the intersecting intrapsychic and social factors that render aspects of the past intractable and unspeakable. The paper is concluded with an examination of the possible sequelae of current silences about the past for individuals as well as broader South African society.

Racism, 'Post-Racism' and Negative Hallucination

Abstract

The concept of negative hallucination emerged from 19th Century psychiatry as a means of explaining a paradoxical facet of psychic life: the evasive movements subjects made so as to avoid something they declared *not to be there*. This notion provides a fascinating link between two distinct logical (and psychological) operations: the *negation of a positive* and the *affirmation of a negative*. These are crucial aspects in the functioning of both racism and what I am calling 'post-racism'. By 'post-racism' I have in mind the complicated and resistant relation to a history of racism exemplified by a group of largely white expatriate South Africans, a relation characterized by types of motivated forgetting, by oscillations between rationalization and denial, and by various forms of 'secondary elaboration' through which apartheid history is de-realized. The idea of negative hallucination provides us not only with an original means of conceptualizing crucial aspects of racist mentality; it also enables us to connect certain features of apartheid racism to post-apartheid forms of 'post-racism'.

The Archive as an Antidote: Lest we Forget

Abstract

The intervention of time tends to have an eroding effect on the memory of events, even those the results of which have been trauma related disorders. The difference between 'normal forgetting' and 'abnormal forgetting' reside in part in the resolution or lack thereof, of the impact of the event. This presentation combines political theory and psychoanalytic thought to examine apartheid racism and its impact on its victims. In particular, it examines the concept of forgetting and its (dys)function in racism induced psychoses. The presentation will also explore the contribution that an *active* archive can make in the fight against the defence represented by forgetfulness. It concludes by proposing that apartheid archives capture a reality, whose recession into the distance of history becomes arrested, and the attendant psychoses-evoking anxiety becomes attenuated.

Re-membering Apartheid, or Archiving between Membrum and Memoria

Abstract

In his seminal book, *Archive Fever* (1995), the philosopher Jacques Derrida reminds us that the Arkhe of the archive coordinates both ontological and nomological principles, propositions of commencement and commandment at the same time. This paper pays close attention to the notion of the jussive, and examines the (re)memory narratives around questions of the command to remember and re-member. Hence, for example, who commands? To whom? To what end? To what purpose? But, and put another way, what is the command (ment?)? Who is charged, and how is the order to be responded to? I will argue that memory is always already en/gaged by both the iterative mark and a relation to the/an other. As such, the narratives, and by implication the Apartheid Archives project as a whole, is nothing less than a call to justice, the ethical, and the beyond of a promise.

Transitioning Racialised Spaces

Abstract

South Africa is often cited as being a society in transition. Travelling from *apartheid* to utopia, the metaphor implies, we are transforming in the in-between. For Winnicott, transitional spaces reside in between internal and external reality, offering an intermediate area in which to play. It could be said that, in contrast, *apartheid* structures impeded such transitional spaces, defining where and where not to play, who could play with whom and what was serious, thereby not available for creativity. Through analyzing narratives written by South Africans remembering *apartheid* (the narratives themselves potentially, but not always, representing a transitional space), this paper explores how space is remembered and inscribed. This includes bodily spaces, physical spaces, such as beaches or restaurants, and fantasy spaces carved out by the act of remembering. The narratives, written *now* about *then*, have a certain transitional quality themselves. This potentially offers possibilities for exploring transitions between the past and the present, and implications for playing in the present and the future.

'Learning to Become' in Post-Apartheid South African Higher Education

Abstract

In periodising our experiences as an *emergent* nation, I can safely conclude that South Africa is in a post-apartheid era. In this paper I want to show that the identity of Black academics is continually and subtly being undermined and deconstructed in spite of the declared public policy of democracy, equity, redress, non-racialism and representivity. I argue that this is achieved through instilling a sense of self doubt in the Black academic as he/she is excluded from serious decision making processes through discourses and other discursive practices that are aimed at marking him/her as '*the other*' and therefore not belonging to the mainstream of academic conversations and practices. I also demonstrate that how we learn to become who we are as academics, is dependent on how we manage to navigate our way around this myriad of landmines that threaten to blow us up at any given moment. In order to give a systematic and logical account of these issues, I employ autoethnographic and cultural biography research techniques couched within a critical emancipatory paradigm in order to lay bare the processes mentioned above. Through this study I hope to inform policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders that perhaps, the *merging* of institutions of higher education since 2001 was a big mistake. What has actually happened is that rather than solve the problems of under-representation of Black people in higher education, these mergers have actually exacerbated the matter of difference. Actually many markers in the service of the euphemism for apartheid, such as diversity, have been used to veil this continued exclusion and marginalization in the construction and learning, to become the different, other.

Playing with the Archive: Reconstructing the Trauma
An Auto-Ethnographic Approach to Telling South African Stories

Abstract

South African theatre played a critical role in the documentation of many stories during Apartheid. The stories represented the broad social and political landscape. For the politically conscious, theatre's role was to enhance the awareness of the general population about the consequences of Apartheid, to educate people about their right to dignity, and to mobilize people to take action. With the advent of the democratic transition, many theatre practitioners grappled to understand what it was that they were meant to speak about. The loss of a political cause left the artist having to re-define art. The attempt to find a voice, devoid of political correctness, within the romanticized landscape of the 'new' South Africa seemed like an insurmountable task. The struggle for South African theatre practitioners to find a voice that speaks beyond an Apartheid/Post-Apartheid binary has been reflective of a national consciousness. This paper argues that finding the personal within the political, social and cultural landscape of South Africa means confronting the trauma of the past, as much as it means the courage to see beyond the smokescreen of democratic South Africa's mythology. The paper explores the role of an auto-ethnographic theatre in excavating our stories from the past into the present, and examines auto-ethnographic theatre as a process and as an art form that enables a closer, safer and more comprehensive reflection of who we are as South Africans.

Gendered Representations in Narratives on Apartheid South Africa

Abstract

This paper reflects on the way in which racist practices intersect with gender as it emerges in narratives on living through apartheid from a group of academics in contemporary South Africa. A wide range of literature has explored the complex intersections of race, gender, class and other forms of difference of difference and power inequality through the history of South Africa before, during and after apartheid. The continued intersection of gender with racist practices and other forms of inequality is more than evident in post-apartheid South Africa and reflected in multiple contexts. HIV/AIDS reflects one such powerful intersection, where poor, black women have been most affected by HIV as well as demonized and victimized by popular and academic discourses in response to the epidemic. Current work on experiences of women in work places, including universities, also highlight the continued marginalization of especially black women in spaces that continue to privilege men and whites. While a number of stories of women and their experiences of the cruel intersection of race, class and gender through rape and abuse have been documented by the TRC and other forms of interrogation, the more 'normal' stories of how race and gender played itself out in racist patriarchal South Africa are arguably not widely documented other than in theoretical terms. Similarly, although there are many studies and also novels during apartheid days and after that explore how race, class and gender intersect in the lives of predominantly working class, black women, many historically applying the now critiqued notion of the triple oppression, there are few studies that document voices, across race, class and other differences, that speak of these complex, interwoven experiences. A narrative analysis located within a broad discourse analytic framework is utilized here, which while not claiming to be generalizable, foregrounds experiences in the narratives that reflect broader ideologies on race, class, culture, gender and sexuality and their enmeshment with each other that were salient in apartheid South Africa and arguably still of relevance today. The paper highlights the multiple and complex ways in which normative gender roles and gender power relations intersect with racialised discourse and racist practices in home, work and public spaces through the stories that participants tell.

Engaging with the Archive: Reconnecting with (My) History in the Diaspora

Abstract

A former student of South African heritage who has lived in Australia recently reconnected with the South Africa story, the story of Apartheid. Her family did not talk about it much and she did not claim or understand it. She researched South African women's stories, and through the process discovered her own traumatic history. I did not see her for months. After the completion of the work she opened up -- she felt sad, but she found strength in knowing that this was her story too. For her, this was painful and also liberating. In this paper, I want to reflect on my own programme of work exploring ways in which people with histories of oppression renegotiate identities in different social contexts following dislocation. I approach my work, which I link with the Apartheid Archives, with a framework that is informed by decolonisation, critical race theory and whiteness studies. I focus on examining everyday incivilities, complicity, silence, and experiences of racialisation for different communities as reported in the narratives and the research we have conducted in Australia. The aim is to lay the ground to look deeper inside the archive and to the diaspora to examine how people negotiate histories of oppression and how they reconstruct new subjectivities in different settings. Examining how people combine histories, social and cultural resources within new contexts may reveal stories that show how people remake identities.

Narrative, Subjectivity and the Ideology of Tolerance

Abstract

In the 15 years since South Africa's transition to democracy, there have been significant shifts from a more openly adversarial and contested political discourse, to public discourses of peace, reconciliation, nation-building, mutual reciprocity and social harmony. This paper explores selected narratives that not only come to reflect this shift in both their form and content, but also reproduce what Slavoj Zizek refers to as an ideology of tolerance. It argues that in the course of pursuing a national discourse of reconciliation, that many of the underlying social tensions that continue to racially divide South African society are inadvertently elided and concealed. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and Slavoj Zizek, the paper examines the intersections between these discourses and the material conditions that support their entrenchment. While attempting to understand how such subject positions become more commonplace, the paper argues that through some of our attempts to examine the interiority of these subject positions through psychoanalytic theory and certain manifestations of post-structuralism, that there is the risk of evacuating these subject positions from the material and ideological terrain in which they occur. More specifically, the paper argues that a limited focus on the subjective dimensions of oppressive processes can sometimes lead to the complete denial of the objective or systemic dimensions, as articulated in the works of Etienne Balibar, Frantz Fanon and Slavoj Zizek. In reflecting on the works of Louis Althusser and Goran Therborn, the paper proposes a re-examination of the potentially useful role of historical concepts such as subject interpellation and the ideological formation of human subjects, and suggests that they may cast further light on these processes of interiorisation.

Reflections on Epistemologies of Ignorance

Abstract

One of the most commonly heard comments made by white South Africans about apartheid era human rights abuses and suffering is, “We didn’t know.” This stance undoubtedly testifies to much more than the apartheid state’s control of the media and misinformation about the political realities in the country. We also see both the manner in which memory is deployed strategically to re-member the past in the light of current political exigencies, and also the perpetuation of the ignore-ances of past privileges, the choices –more, and less, conscious, *not to know*. Taking up the term, *Epistemologies of Ignorance*, coined by Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (2007) the paper explores “not knowing” in white apartheid identities, particularly as this relates to the Apartheid Archives.

Student Abstracts

2009 Psychology Honours Students

Aspects of Apartheid

Abstract

Wits Psychology Honours students were invited to join the Apartheid Archive Project, and chose a related topic to research as part of the Honours course. The group has chosen diverse topics related to Apartheid and are all in the process of field work. The Honours students will each present a short overview of their topic and describe their research method and field work experiences. Furthermore, each student will comment on how their research will contribute to the overall project, and briefly describe how it has shaped perspectives and learning. Challenges and lessons learnt could be of value to the broader Apartheid Archive Project community and other students. Group members are all at different stages as sourcing participants has been difficult for some. Further, actually writing a personal narrative about Apartheid has proved challenging for many, and is worthy of consideration. The diverse set of research projects will hopefully stimulate questions and comments related to the broader research process within this Project.

Theatrical Performances

Wits School of Arts

Hayani

Directed by Warren Nebe, this play delves into the stories of two unique South Africans to reveal a very complex, honest and poignant journey towards understanding themselves as South Africans. Together with live music on stage, the audience is weaved into a magical display of intimate and beautiful storytelling. This play brings together two of South Africa's most exciting up and coming young performers, namely Atandwa Kani and Nathaniel Ramabulana.

Living In Strange Lands - The Tsafendas Story

Beginning its life as a staged reading at the Wits Kultcha Klub, this play has since been performed to critical acclaim, both nationally and internationally. The story is both an authentic historical account as well as an investigation of race and identity in the context of Apartheid South Africa. Specifically, the plot follows the imprisonment of Dimitri Tsafendas, the man who assassinated the architect of Apartheid, Dr Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd. This collaborative play spans from 1966, when Tsafendas was sentenced to life imprisonment, until 1994 when he was released by President Nelson Mandela and transferred to Sterkfontein Mental Hospital where he remained until his death in 1999. Written by Anton Robert Krueger and directed by Lynne Maree, this play displays how Tsafendas, portrayed by Renos Nicos Spanoudes, irrevocably altered the course of South African history. This is achieved by integrating conventional theatre with slide footage displaying real life events in order to explore as to whether Tsafendas was carrying out the instructions of a subversive group, a madman listening to the voice of a tapeworm or simply an ordinary man, living in strange lands.

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Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company

Playback Theatre is an improvisational form of theatre based on the personal stories of audience members. In the course of a performance, a series of stories are spontaneously told by volunteer Tellers. Each story is then paired with a dramatic enactment inspired by the particular text, mood and images inherent in the 'just-told' narrative.

The Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company applies this innovative form of theatre to various social issues including HIV/AIDS, violence, gender and racism. Playback Theatre is especially suited to confronting the challenging stories of South Africans as it has been effectively used in educational, therapeutic and social change settings in order to break down barriers and taboos around sensitive issues such as racism using the magic of theatre. One of the strongest features of Playback Theatre is that it allows marginalised voices to be heard in a space that is modelled on the core values of empathy and community. Playback Theatre thus becomes a vehicle for reflection of people's lives.