Call for Proposals

The Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) and the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand are inviting submissions for a large public convening to engage the aftermath of the Marikana massacre and the Farlam Commission of Inquiry that followed it. This convening will take place in Johannesburg from the evening of 07 May 2015 to 09 May 2015.

In the two years since the massacre, the Farlam Commission has been the site of struggles over the narratives, meanings, and implications of the events at Marikana. The story told by the Police - of the threat posed by a charging mob - has been challenged by the story told by the miners and their families - of a relatively-peaceful and spontaneous mass protest. The roles of the unions, of the mining companies, and high-level politicians in encouraging the clash between protestors and police have been argued and passionately debated. At the Commission, representatives of the government and the police, the miners and the unions, and the widows and families of the deceased have all set out their stories. Not all of these stories have been taken up by the country’s media.

The Commission is due to end its hearings towards the end of 2014, and we can expect the final Report to be given to the President in the months thereafter. This Report will seek to set out an official story, explaining what happened at Marikana. But in the light of persistent criticisms of the Commission’s operations and processes, as well as of claims and counter-claims made both in the Commission and outside of it, it is unlikely that this Report will resolve the competing versions. Instead, the Commission’s ‘official’ history will only be one of many competing histories.

The public convening will provide a space in which these competing narratives can be aired, alongside and in engagement with the ‘official’ history.

We invite proposals that discuss and engage with these competing stories and histories of Marikana, both official and unofficial. We encourage proposals that engage with the processes of narrative construction in the Commission of Inquiry: with the legal framework and its rules of evidence, with political claims made, with activism in and around the hearing. What kinds of stories has the Commission encouraged, and what has it left out?

We also encourage proposals that tell other stories: what are the contexts within which Marikana occurred? What has happened afterwards – whether in the
mining sector, in the home communities of the miners, or among the families of the deceased? The effects of the events at Marikana are continuing to resonate across the country: what might their impact come to be in the future?

Submissions

We encourage many different kinds of submissions.

In addition to critical academic papers, we are seeking practitioners’ and activists’ reflections on their involvement in Marikana and the Farlam Commission. Proposals for creative and artistic responses to the massacre and the Commission – including forms of creative writing, visual arts, curated exhibitions, performances, and other unclassifiable work – will be welcomed.

Your proposal should indicate which of these categories best fits your work.

Proposals should include both a 300-word description of the planned work (which, for academic papers, should double as an abstract of the proposed paper) and a brief biographical statement, or curriculum vitae (CV).

Proposals must be submitted to Zahn.Gowar@wits.ac.za by 26 September 2014.

Decisions will be reported in October.

Contacts

For queries regarding the call for proposals and the convening, please contact: Julian.Brown@wits.ac.za

For administrative queries and proposal submissions, please contact: Zahn.Gowar@wits.ac.za

Organising Committee

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