Seminar: Revolution, restitution and redress: Obligations towards restoring our humanity

The Centre for Critical Research on Race and Identity (CCRRI) invites you to a seminar “Revolution, restitution and redress: Obligations towards restoring our humanity” by Professor Sharlene Swartz.

Date: Thursday, 23 March 2017
Time: 13h00 - 14h00
Venue: CCRRI Seminar Room, 2nd Floor, George Campbell Building, Howard College Campus

Abstract: South Africa’s history of colonial and apartheid injustice has resulted in damage to people’s humanity and personhood. These effects are clearly evidenced in widening inequality, deepening poverty, high levels of racism and increasing social distance, along with ongoing social protests. These debilitating effects, while receiving national attention, require more than government efforts to overcome.

Drawing on Paolo Freire, Steve Biko’s and Nancy Fraser’s notions of critical consciousness and elucidation of the tripartite need for recognition, rehumanising and redistribution in order for justice to be done, it elucidates a reimagined understanding of restitution as ‘social restitution’. It examines how a group of 60 South Africans across divides of sex, race, class and generation respond to this notion of ‘social restitution’ and how they perceive such conversation is able to address the ongoing effects of past injustice.

In arriving at a conceptualisation of social restitution as both voluntary action and moral obligation for restoring our humanity, this paper describes social restitution as (1) separate to legal notions of restitution although it is continuous with it; (2) requiring a conscious positioning of actors in past injustice beyond that of victim and perpetrator; (3) aiming at restored personhood and rehumanising the collective; and (4) becoming possible through a process of action-oriented dialogues.

Speaker: Sharlene Swartz is a Research Director at the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa and an adjunct Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Cape Town. She holds undergraduate degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Zululand in South Africa; a Master’s degree from Harvard University and a PhD from the University of Cambridge.

Her expertise and current research centres on the just inclusion of youth in a transforming society that includes interpersonal and communal notions of restitution. Her work is characterised by a focus on Southern theory, emancipatory methodologies and critical race theory. Before embarking on graduate studies, Sharlene spent 12 years at youth NGO where she pioneered peer-led social justice programmes for school-going youth.

She has published widely in academic journals and has authored or edited seven books including Ikasi: the moral ecology of South Africa’s township youth (2009); Teenage Tata: Voices of Young Fathers in South Africa (2009); Youth citizenship and the politics of belonging (2013); and Another Country: Everyday Social Restitution (2016). She is the International Sociological Association’s Sociology of Youth research committee’s vice President for Africa and the Middle East and is the chair of the Restitution Foundation in South Africa.

Please RSVP: Mr. Hlumelo Ncopo - Ncopoh@ukzn.ac.za / X3902